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SHORT READINGS

FOR

FAMILY PRAYERS;

ESSAYS,

AND

SERMONS.

BY

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TO
THE HONOURABLE BARON PENNEFATHER,

IN TOKEN OF HIGH RESPECT

FOR HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CHARACTER,

AND

OF SINCERE GRATITUDE

FOR A LONG CONTINUED SERIES OF PERSONAL KINDNESSES

BOTH FROM HIMSELF AND FROM ONE WHO IS NOW

A SAINT IN HEAVEN,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE INSCRIBED

BY

HIS MUCH OBLIGED AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE greater part of the contents of this volume has appeared from time to time in "The Church of England Magazine," "The Christian Observer," and "The Christian Examiner."

The lesser pieces with which the work opens were intended to be furnished in sufficient numbers to supply a "short reading" for every day in the year. But time and leisure for the completion of such a purpose failing, the author here presents a sample of his original design.

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SHORT READINGS FOR FAMILY PRAYERS.

I.

JANUARY 1.

How prone are we, amidst the various calls of life, to forget the one thing needful, the only concernment worth our care ! It is, then, a merciful provision that the stream of time does not run on in one continuous flow, but that it is broken up and separated into larger portions, which are for “ signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years.” These changes and vicissitudes present us successively with renewed occasions and encouragements to amend our lives, and to set out, as it were, on a new score. Deeply conscious, as we all must be, of the negligences, sins, and follies of the past, it gives fresh vigour to the mind, to fix, on some given point, that we may start from thence anew, and “ forgetting those

things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, may press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is this very thought which gives its vitalizing energy to the Gospel message, and renders it, when it reaches the heart, "the power of God unto salvation." I mean the thought, the transporting thought, that now the former things are as if they had never been; that all the endless items of our accounts with God, confused, entangled, beyond our power to calculate, arrange, or settle, are clean blotted out of the book of life, and have vanished like a dream when one awaketh; that we are henceforth become as other men; that the future is a free field of action, and is now all that we have to look to; that in a word, "old things are passed away, and all things are become new." This, I say, is the germ of that regenerating principle, the spring of that new being, the spark of that celestial fire which God imparts to the soul when he "gives to us eternal life, that life which is in his Son."

In the very nature of things there is something encouraging to the mind and elevating to the spirits, in the simple idea of setting out afresh. Let us avail ourselves, then, of the present opportunity. A new year this day opens to our view. Let us hear its voice, for it is the voice of Him

who calls it into being. Its voice is like the striking of the clock, to one who has but a few hours to live, or who may never hear the solemn stroke again. The new year emphatically repeats the lesson of all former ones,—“ Prepare to meet thy God :” “ Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day,” still less a year, “ may bring forth.” Remember, that if you outlive these coming months, they will leave you, only to reappear again, and to bear their testimony for or against you at the day of judgment. But, while we do not disregard the warnings, let us look to the encouragement which this renewal of our lease of life suggests. For the past, let it remind us, that there is full and unreserved forgiveness, if we repent and accept of mercy freely offered. For the future, the voice of the new year says (and shall not all that is within us echo the sound ?) “ Keep those commandments which are their own reward : continue in those ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace : walk as children of the light, as children of the sunshine of God’s presence : ‘ live no longer unto yourselves, but unto Him who died for you and rose again.’ ” If we purchase some valuable, rare, and ornamental article, when it is new and fresh we watch vigilantly and anxiously, that nothing should touch it or come near it which could in-

jure its polish, or put the least part of its machinery in disorder. Let us, then, consider this rising year as an instrument of value beyond all conceivable calculation, placed in our hands, that we may thereby fit and prepare our souls for heaven. Let us say, each of us individually, to ourselves, "Now, with the blessing of God, I will start from this point, and begin my life afresh. I will watch and pray against every sin, and more especially against whatever may be the sin that doth most easily beset me. I will guard with a holy jealousy against the first encroachments of the tempter. I will, with the grace of God, preserve this new page, which now opens in the book of life, free from every blot or stain of impurity or defilement. I will, in the language of the collect for this day, seek 'the true circumcision of the Spirit, that my heart and all my members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, I may in all things obey God's blessed will, through Jesus Christ my Lord.'"

II.

JANUARY 2.

ASSEMBLED as we are on this second morning of the year, we cannot perhaps improve the occasion better, than by asking ourselves how we have kept the resolutions formed yesterday. How would it be with us, if this were to serve as a sample of the whole, and if the year were to be altogether such as this first day of it has been? How have we improved the time? How have our tempers been regulated, and our passions ordered? Have we resisted, or have we yielded to the ordinary temptations—to anger, fretfulness, indolence, or pride? In what currents have we suffered our thoughts to flow? How have we been in our closets, and in secret prayer? Have we “as much as lay in us, lived peaceably” and amiably with those around us? or have we by unkindness and petty provocations disturbed the quiet or comfort of the domestic scene? If we can answer these questions satisfactorily, let us thank God, take courage, and go forward. If not, let us not waste our time, or exhaust our strength in unavailing sorrow or unprofitable regret; but let us fly at once to the mercy-seat for

pardon. Let us return to the path of happiness and duty, before we have gone still farther from it. Let us apply the remedy, before the disease has become worse. Let us with redoubled energy renew the resolutions of yesterday.

The first lesson appointed for this day,* sets before us the most animating motives for thus resolving. It shows us how God can create worlds and systems out of nothing; nay, how he can educe beauty, and harmony, and order, out of confusion and emptiness. "God said, let there be light, and there was light." And why may not He, "who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" He has promised to do so, if we earnestly pray for grace, and faithfully improve that grace when given.

When God had in five days accomplished his preparatory works, when He had divided the light from the darkness, the waters from the waters, and the dry land from the seas, when He had filled the earth with fertility, and adorned it with all the varieties of vegetable beauty, when He had fixed his two great lights in heaven, and "made the stars also," when He had brought forth all the various tribes of "the living creatures

* Gen. i.

after their kind," when all was ready, and God saw that all was good, and when everything seemed waiting for the entrance of the chief actor upon the stage, "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Behold the position which we *ought* to occupy, the attitude in which we *ought* to stand before God and his creation! And, though we fell from our first estate, yet, blessed be God, if we be in Christ Jesus, we have fallen only that we might rise again, and "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." Let us keep in mind "how holily and justly and unblameably we should behave ourselves" who bear this sacred character and this divine impression. Let us remember that we are placed here as representatives of the sovereign Ruler of this lower world. Such we are, both by creation and redemption; and, consequently, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Let us then go forth this day upon our several calls of duty, and let us, as with one soul, resolve that, "whatsoever we do, we do all to the glory of God."

III.

ON THE WISE MEN.

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews ? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

IN the homage paid by these eastern sages to the infant Saviour, we have a faithful representation of the nature of the Christian dispensation, some first-fruits of that kingdom whose foundations are laid in humility. And if it be true that in every system of religion there is a moral affinity and correspondence between the worshipper and the object worshipped, there is, doubtless, a fine exemplification of that truth in the spectacle here presented to our view ; men distinguished as the magi for depth of learning, and profoundly versed in every branch of human science, prostrate in adoration before the cradle of an infant, and that infant none other than incarnate Godhead. Thus, according to the principle laid down, the worshippers of a child must become as little children themselves. It is true that these wise men had the witness of a sign from heaven ; and that they

had, in all probability, ancient prophecies, which led them to hail that star as the herald of one to appear in more than earthly glory. Nay, we cannot doubt that an immediate revelation to their own minds gave more detailed and explicit knowledge of his auspicious birth. But still, had these Gentiles possessed, in however rich and abundant stores, the wisdom of this world only, they could not but have been offended at the lowly scene which Bethlehem presented. Their traditionary reports had spoken of a Prince, to whose sceptre all nations must bow down. Their expectations, at least, were such as taught them to believe that all Jerusalem would be filled with the rumour of this new-born King. But, when they found they alone, though Gentiles and strangers in Jerusalem, were concerned about the matter, till, by their own report, they aroused the fears and jealousy of Herod ; and when, directed by the star, they saw the meanness and destitution that prevailed—the stable, the manger, the babe swathed in such swaddling-clothes as poverty could wrap around him—no credence but that of supernatural faith could have withstood the reluctance of flesh and blood to discern the glory which was thus mysteriously veiled and entombed within such thick enclosures. In vain would the star, like the finger of God, point to the consecrated spot.

Science, falsely so called, could have resolved it into a meteoric exhalation, or a mere illusion of the senses. They might, on entering the lonely dwelling, have heard from his virgin mother the wondrous story of his birth ; how the Holy Ghost had come upon her, and the power of the Highest had overshadowed her. She might have told them that, though ministering in all maternal offices to his childish wants, “her soul did magnify him as the Lord, and her spirit rejoiced in him as God her Saviour.” But could nature, alive to temporal things, and dead to things eternal, have “believed her report?” Doubtless, while she bore that treasure in her womb, she was not silent in his praise ; and yet, “to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?” If her testimony had been available, would she have been driven with her child and Saviour, to make her abode with the beasts that perish?

The incarnation no less than the atoning sacrifice, the manger no less than the cross, was “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” “No man can say that,” in his birth, his life, or death, “Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” It was not their knowledge of the stars, or their insight into the hidden mysteries of nature ; it was not flesh and blood, which revealed unto these Gentile saints, a God enshrined in

helpless infancy. No. It was the divine inspiration, which alone can teach the heart, and render it the recipient of celestial light. It was the still small voice from heaven, which said, "In that manger behold your God." It was the wisdom from above, which brought down these sages before "him whom man despiseth," and whom the world rejected.

As Christ was in the days of his flesh and infancy, so is his religion now. And he who will espouse his cause and interest, must himself become as a little child, in innocence, in simplicity, in insensibility to the world's attraction, and in enfranchisement from its anxiety and cares. He must, at least, earnestly desire that blessed state of mind: he must hunger and thirst after that righteousness. As the magi set out from distant lands, and traversed inhospitable regions, that they might present themselves as worshippers of the infant Jesus, so must those who would now come to Christ break through all associations, and sever every tie which would bind them to this earth. They must, by an inward renunciation, loose themselves from all that cleaves too closely to their hearts. They must, in a spiritual sense, "get them out of their country and from their kindred, and come into the land which God will show them." Nor, if our constant inquiry be,

“ Where is He that is born King of the Jews ?” “ if we seek Jesus which was crucified,” and desire that better country where He now lives and reigns, need we fear or faint, though we have yet to travel many a dark and dreary stage. If we have once seen the true directing star, “ the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ;” if we have not been “ disobedient to the heavenly vision,” but owned and recognised it as our effectual calling ; He who shined in our hearts will never leave us nor forsake us. He may for a little moment seem to hide his face. We may for a time “ walk in darkness, and have no light.” But let us “ trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon our God ;” and ere long the star will reappear. Nay, there have been instances where the light which beamed like opening heaven at the first conversion of the soul, has withdrawn, and through many a lengthened year refused to shine with its early lustre. But, as life’s journey has hastened to its close, lo, the luminary of the morning has risen as an evening star, and pointed to the bright regions where Jesus dwells, and lightened the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, and caused the soul, while passing through, to “ rejoice with exceeding great joy.”

IV.

THOUGHTS ON THE SABBATH.

THERE is no commandment in which God's paternal goodness and indulgence appear more conspicuously, than "Hallow my sabbaths." The Sabbath is a day which He has invited us to pass with Him, in the most intimate and endearing converse. He has given us six days in each week to pursue our worldly callings, and to "do all that we have to do." But, with the affectionate condescension of a father, He has reserved this one day to himself, that his children may not, by too long intervals of absence, be estranged from Him; that they may periodically return from the labours and avocations of the world, to the peaceful shelter and pure enjoyments of their Father's dwelling. On this day the doors of his temple are thrown open. On this day young and old, rich and poor, master and servant, are equally invited to God's house, and to His company, to "come before His presence with thanksgiving, and to shew themselves glad in Him with psalms"—to sit as guests around his table, and with all the ease of filial confidence, to taste the pleasures, and to delight in the abundance of his habitation.

But the Sabbath is not only a gracious conde-

scension, it is moreover a profoundly wise provision for our everlasting welfare. We are sent into this world, merely for the purpose of preparing us for another. Six days in the week are allowed us for our worldly callings, that, amidst the trials, and temptations, and difficulties of life, we may practise self-denial and self-control; that we may make proof of our fidelity to God; that, tossed upon the waves of this troublous ocean, we may learn the more to prize, and be fitted to enjoy with increased delight, that peaceful haven "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

Thus the six days' toil is intended to enhance our future blessedness. But the Sabbath's repose is a means altogether of another kind. It is not, like the former, designed to heighten the happiness to come, by force of contrast. It is meant rather to prepare us for it, by use and habit. It is a day appointed for us to learn the graces and practise the virtues of the blessed; and that we may form tastes and tempers congenial to the life, the nature, and the element of heaven. If this truth were duly considered, it would be productive of the best effects. Men would perceive, that to hope for salvation and to neglect the Sabbath, is a contradiction in the very notion of it; for, in fact, the Sabbath is so far an actual

anticipation of that heaven to which salvation leads, that the mind that delights not in God's peculiar day, wants the very substance and essential principle out of which our future happiness must grow. It is a fundamental error to imagine of heaven as of some fine and brilliant place, in which all, if indiscriminately admitted by God's indulgence, would be happy. No : heaven is a state of mind rather than a place ; and its highest happiness is but the full measure and perfection of that inward peace and joy which those experience who love God's Sabbath, and call it a delight. Heaven is an everlasting Sabbath. And our Sabbaths here are prelibations and miniatures of Heaven. They are, as it were, rehearsals of those glorious harmonies which we shall celebrate in eternity. It is on this day, and by our feelings towards this day, that we can best ascertain whether we should be really happy in heaven. It is on this day that we must try our wings, before we can take our flight to the land of saints and angels. It is on this day, that streams flow down from heaven to earth, which he who tastes without a relish, would only loathe and turn away from the fulness of the parent fountain. The truth is, that he who wakes upon a Sabbath morning, and rises with no reflection but that it wants the interest of a common day, and is distinguished

from the other portions of the week only by a gloomy absence of amusement; he who kindles at such a season with no glow of heart, and responds with no grateful movement of the soul to that still small voice which calls him to a Sabbath's calm delights, its innocent enjoyments, its harmless pleasures, its cheerful worship, its communion with heaven—the mind, I say, which is thus insensible, wants the essential element of the religious life. It is devoid of that seed out of which a happy immortality alone can grow. If admitted to Heaven it would there pine away an irksome being, an existence without savour, an insupportable load of life, a vacuity and dreariness to whose eternal sameness and insipidity it would prefer annihilation, or, in idea at least, the restless excitements of hell itself.

These thoughts are serious and awful; and could not but alarm—if duly weighed—the negligent or wicked. But to those who have any portion of sincerity in religion, there is every thing consolatory and encouraging in such views. They remove that gloomy veil which, to the mere natural eye, overhangs the future world—those shapeless horrors in which imagination invests the dark descent of death, and the cheerless and still darker void which lies beyond it. They cheer the pious soul with a lively hope, that after death the scene

will not be altogether strange and new ; that what it loved on earth it will find improved in heaven ; that the enjoyment of the Sabbath is a “tasting of the powers of the world to come ;” and differs in degree only, not in kind or nature, from the blessedness above.

But to make the Sabbath operate with its full effect, it should be observed, not only with individual piety, but with public reverence. In places where it is thus hallowed, its gracious influences descend in copious streams. It is this which, above all other means of grace, early engages the youthful mind, and wins it to the service and to the love of God. After the bustle and labours of an active week, it sees with unspeakable delight all things around assume the air of peace. No anxieties disturb the noiseless and gentle pleasures of this happy day. No voice is heard in the streets ; no sounds invade the ear but the bell which summons to the house of prayer, but psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, ascending upon the wings of faith and love to heaven. This is indeed a Christian festival ; this is like a day which the Lord has made. These are the Sabbaths which would bring down God’s blessing upon this country—which would fill her barns with plenty, which would make her oxen strong to labour, which would bless her victuals with increase, so

that there would be no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in her streets.

V.

JACOB'S DREAM. (GEN. XXVIII.)

IF, in the high-wrought and artificial system in which we live, home be still the centre around which our fondest recollections gather, and towards which our purest affections point; and if, as we leave that magic spot, we feel to drag a lengthening chain, and turn again and again to take a parting look, and bid another last farewell; how much stronger must have been this attraction, and with how much tenderer ties must the heart have been bound to the domestic altar, in the days of patriarchal simplicity and of pastoral life. To artless shepherds, unaccustomed to the face of strangers—unpractised in those ways which, more or less, constitute all, in these latter times, citizens of the world—nothing could have been more trying or appalling than to quit the paternal roof, the well known haunts of childhood—scenes beyond which their steps had never strayed before, and in absence from which no single day of life had ever been passed. Such was the call which summoned Jacob from his country, his kindred, and

his father's house. At the command of Isaac he sets forth, leaving all that he loved on earth behind him, to seek his fortune in a strange land. "And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." (ver. 10, 11.)

Can any thing present to the mind a more thorough picture of dreariness and desolation? Far from that home which he had in all probability never left before, fatigued by a journey on foot of forty miles, no bed but the earth to lie on, no pillows but the stones, no canopy but the heavens, and those involved in night; the sun gone down, all dark and silent as the grave: if the thoughts of Jacob had taken their colouring from the surrounding scene, how dense a cloud and deep a melancholy had overhung his soul! But those who walk by faith are "never less alone than when alone." The God before whom he had walked can make the night as clear as the day, and "turn the shadow of death into the morning." Without the patriarch was one monotony of gloom; but what visions and living scenes of light opened to his view within! "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it

reached to heaven ; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." (ver. 12.)

If he had felt himself deserted, and uncheered by social intercourse and human converse, there now bursts upon his sight a prospect so animated, so peopled, and so filled with life, as at once to eclipse the brightest exhibitions of this lower world. If his distant home weighed with painful pressure, as under similar circumstances it often does, upon the heart of Jacob ; if the thought arose, as, alas ! it too often will, that now he would meet no eye that had ever seen the face, no ear that had ever heard the voice, of those he had left behind ; how cheering must have been the sight, how comfortable must have been the words, when looking up the ladder which united earth to heaven, "Behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac." I am the God before whom that father from whom you have now been parted, walked ere you were born, and before whom he continues to walk, up to this present moment. He is now in my view—my eyes are now upon him—and he is under the shadow of my wings. I will never leave him nor forsake him. No evil shall befall him ; neither shall any plague come nigh his dwelling. And for thyself, behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou

goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

Such were the scenes which passed in the chambers of imagery within, while, if any human eye had seen him, the patriarch would have presented no appearance but that of loneliness and desertion. And so it is, in a certain sense, with all his spiritual descendants. The substance of his dream is the waking certainty which their faith reveals. Though strangers on earth, they “see,” by faith, “heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” They see in Jesus, the true ladder, the new and living way into the holiest. Though wandering far from their earthly home, they find a home in God. He who is their God, is the God of all they love in Him. If separated for a time from family and friends, He will bring them all together again. If it be for their good, He will give them their heart’s desire “in this present time.” If not, He will defer the blessing, only that they may have a still happier meeting, a still more joyful reunion in the world to come.

VI.

ON THE WILL AND AFFECTIONS.

MANY are the troubles of the righteous. They are not only sharers in those sorrows which are common to man: they have trials peculiar to themselves. They live in a land of strangers: they are aliens from the sympathies of the world around them: they are constrained to dwell with Meseck, and to have their habitation amongst the tents of Kedar. They are alone in the midst of the general crowd; and often do they sit in solitary places and adopt the psalmist's sore complaint: "I became a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours; and they of mine acquaintance were afraid of me; and they that did see me without conveyed themselves from me. I am clean forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am become like a broken vessel."

Thus repelled from abroad, this pressure of the surrounding atmosphere drives the lonely pilgrim to seek a refuge in his own interior, and to fly from the world without to the world within. There, at his happier moments, "a good man is satisfied from himself:" God is sensible to his

heart, and he wants nothing. There he “lies down in green pastures, and beside still waters.” There

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree.”

“There, if the Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
O, with what peace, and joy, and love
She communes with her God !”

But how fluctuating is the heart of man ! How often and how quickly does “the cloudy and dark day” succeed that happy sunshine of the breast ! How often is the Christian disposed to say, “O, that it were with me as in months past !” At such moments of depression the child of God is not unfrequently inclined to think that the sun of his happiness is set, to rise no more. He is no longer sensible of the divine presence : he walks no longer in ways of pleasantness and paths of peace : he feels no spontaneous movement of the affections, no joyful flow of love towards God ; and concludes that, because the streams are dried up, the fountain also itself has failed. He fears that the root of loyalty has withered in his soul, that the vitality of religion is extinct, in a word, that the love of God has no longer a dwelling-place in his heart.

It has been often observed that these distresses, in proportion as they are deeply felt, are calculated, on calm reflection, to work out their own relief; for we never thus lament the loss of what we do not highly value. And, if we prize the love of God at so high a rate, that very appreciation of the thing is assuredly nothing else, though in disguise and shaded from the view, than the very tendency of the soul, whose fancied absence we deplore.

But there is another remedy in this case. Allow that religion, as a fountain of happiness and well-spring of joy, is not now in perceptible life and action in the soul. Allow that, were our Saviour to address the affections, as he did the son of Jonas, and say, "Lovest thou me?" there would be "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." Still, distressing as this silence would be, let us try deeper; and a cheering response may follow. If the heart be right with God, however *feelings* may fluctuate, there is a *principle* seated there in which, after the image of Him that created it, "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." This principle is the will. Here is the moral centre of gravity. To this we are to look if we are to ascertain our state towards God. It is the resolution of the will which determines the point for which we

make, the direction in which we move, the shore to which we steer the vessel. The affections are like the winds which sometimes favour, sometimes retard her course; but the will is like the mind that has planned her voyage, and keeps the haven where she would be continually in view, and which, however she may tack about, will, with God's good blessing, bring her in safety to the eternal shore. "Who is among you," saith the prophet, "that feareth God, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

But how shall the believer, when his affections are cold, his feelings dry, and his comforts low, be enabled to take effectually this wise and animating counsel? Let him, I answer, pursue the following course: let him try the process I would here suggest. Let him descend from the surface into the deeper strata of his heart, and there inquire how the matter stands between himself and God. There is a love of principle as well as a love of feeling. Besides the adherence of the affections, there is a preference of the will; and it is the latter, not the former, that unequivocally denotes that the root of love is in the heart, though it seem for the present to put forth neither leaves nor branches. If, then, the child of God, as he

often may, feels his affections lifeless and his soul in heaviness ; if he cannot now delight himself in the Lord, or rejoice in the presence of his God ; if in this state he is tempted to doubt his acceptance and his interest in the covenant of peace, let him thus commune with his own heart, and search out his spirit ; let him ask the witness there not whether his affections are freely flowing, but whether his will is stedfastly fixed and resolved for God ; let him, in a word, put his loyalty to the following test : “ Comfortless as I may be, would I exchange the Master I have chosen for any of those ‘ lords many and gods many,’ who would claim the allegiance of my heart ? If the fulness of the earth, and all the glories of the world were offered me, would I purchase them at the expense of deliberate apostacy from God ? Nay, would I not rather die ten thousand deaths than deny the Lord that bought me, or than even exchange these godly sorrows for any joys which the world can give ? If I had the choice, would I not ‘ rather suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ?’ Should I not ‘ esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the earth ?’ ” If the conscience returns at once an unhesitating answer to these inquiries ; if our heart burns within us, if it glows with loyalty, if it spurns the

name of traitor, and with a high and holy indignation defies the charge of perfidy towards heaven; assuredly, if these be the spontaneous movements of our soul, we cannot doubt that all is right within, or hesitate to claim an interest in those inspiring words, "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us."

Such, then, is the process which I recommend, and of which, I trust, I have not unfrequently experienced the benefit myself. It is an appeal from the affections which are changeable, and which more or less are animal, to the will, which, if we be his, is unchangeably fixed on God, and whose seat is the calm region of the spirit. And often will the believer by this appeal fan the very affections themselves into a flame. The response of the deeper principle beneath will agitate the surface of the soil above, and the will, aroused to make a good confession, will awaken the lighter faculties of the spiritual nature. The warmth which glows at the centre will spread itself to the remote extremities of the heart. The fountain being stirred, the stream will be set in motion, and flow back with gentle current unto God.

VII.

CHILDREN'S STORIES.

WHETHER children happen to be present or not, it is sometimes profitable to read the records of their simplicity, and to listen to those lessons which their unaffected piety may often teach us. I shall, then, as part of this morning's exercise, relate a touching anecdote, which I had from the clergyman of the parish where the scene was laid.

In the family of a gentleman of fortune, one of a large flock of children, and but one, was, at the time referred to, brought to the knowledge of a Saviour's love. All the rest, though respectable, amiable, and naturally well disposed, were still but strangers to those blessed truths which were the treasure of her own heart. That her beloved family, that every member of the dear circle within which all her earthly interests were enclosed—that they might be brought to God, to serve Him here, and to dwell with Him hereafter—this was the constant subject of her thoughts, the matter of her ceaseless prayer. At about twelve years of age, that distemper which has summoned away so many young saints to glory commenced its fatal ravages on her frame. Dur-

ing a long and painful and wearisome sickness, she evinced a peculiar sweetness and gentleness of disposition, and, uniformly, a lamb-like patience. But still her mind was continually occupied about the spiritual welfare and everlasting salvation of her beloved relations. In this state of distressing and harassing anxiety, it pleased the Lord (can we for a moment hesitate in ascribing the interposition to Him?) to comfort her by a dream; and, in that vision of the night, to send what she took as a resolution of all her doubts and an answer to all her prayers. She dreamed that she was introduced into a large apartment, which formed a kind of ante-chamber to the palace of eternity. Round this room were placed her father, her mother, her brothers and sisters—all seated, and waiting in silent, unutterable suspense. When they had continued for some time, she dreamed that the door of heaven opened, and a celestial figure, which she took to be the Saviour, entered the apartment, holding in his hand a parcel of cards or tickets. He passed with a slow and deliberate motion round the circle, distributing, as he advanced, a separate card to each, and then retired. For a time, an awful, anxious pause ensued. All sat still and motionless, as if afraid to examine what was written upon the several tickets. At length they took courage,

and simultaneously lifted them up to their eyes; and, lo! upon each ticket the same writing appeared. It consisted of but one word, and that word was—"forgiveness." Let dreams be what they may, this favoured child received the one in question as a messenger from heaven: it answered all her doubts, and cheered her on her way to an early grave.

Of two little ones, the eldest not above six years old, the following account is given in a French story. These children are represented as being under the most perfect discipline; and yet, nevertheless, their parents had observed that, without asking leave, they absented themselves frequently, at a particular hour of the day. Such conduct in children, so dutiful and amenable, led them to suspect that there must be something more than mere wantonness, to account for this periodical and mysterious withdrawal. They resolved, then, to be upon the watch. They observed attentively; and the children were as usual absent. The parents went forth, and stole out, cautiously and gently, by a path, to a sequestered and favourite spot, whither they supposed these little ones had strayed. As they walked along a thickly planted hedge-row, they thought they heard the sound of infant voices on the other side. They paused and listened. They were the

voices of their own children. They were engaged in prayer ; and the petition they were that moment offering was for their father and mother. Thus the plot was unravelled, and the secret came to light.

I have often grounded on this little story a piece of affectionate counsel to all children. Though it be the child's first duty, next to that immediately to God, to hide nothing which ought not to be concealed from their parents, and though openness and simplicity be the richest ornaments which youth can wear, yet there is one secret which I would advise even little children to keep from parents, instructors, and every human being. I would advise them, then, like the subjects of this story, to retire into some secluded place, and there, when all alone with God, to pray the best prayer they can ; and to tell this neither to father nor mother, nor to any living being. They will often perhaps be tempted to reveal the secret, from the love of talk, or of praise, or for the better purpose of making their parents happy. But let them resist the temptation ; and there will then be a secret between God and them, known to none else besides. And this will often lead them to think of God, and to think of Him so as to make the thought delightful, and the sense of his presence cheering to the heart and pleasant to the soul.

VIII.

ON LUKE xxii. 70.

“Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?”—
LUKE xxii. 70.

To me there is no passage in the whole of our blessed Saviour's afflicted life more touching or affecting than that in which He replies with so much meekness to the taunting and insidious question of his persecutors, “Art thou the Christ? tell us” (Luke xxii. 67). There is something in his answer which graphically paints the total want of all fair justice with which He was treated, the capricious cruelty which would force Him to speak, when all He could say was vain, and when He was, at the very moment, in the hands of those that hated Him: “He said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe; and, if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.” Nor does the scripture pencilling contain, amidst its boldest lights and shades, a sublimer specimen of that humiliation and glory which were so wondrously united and contrasted in the person of “Emmanuel, God with us,” than that which is here presented: “Hereafter,” says this helpless prisoner, fast bound in misery and iron, “shall

the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." It was upon this announcement that all with one voice exclaimed, "Art thou then the Son of God?" It was, I need not say, in no spirit of fair inquiry that these words were spoken. No; it was either that they might find accusation against Him, or that they might insult Him by a self-answered question, and one which only heaped scorn and ridicule upon his high pretensions. It was such a mode of questioning as that, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead?" (John viii. 53.) Or that, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (John viii. 57.) But, in whatever spirit these words were then employed, we may not unprofitably occupy a few moments in accommodating them to certain cases, in which we may imagine them to have been spoken.

1. Let us conceive, then, one who had been involved in the clouds of the socinian heresy, and from whose eyes had been intercepted "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Let us, then, conceive the power of truth prevailing, the mists of doubt dispersing, the Sun of righteousness for the first time arising, the soul constrained to acknowledge and the tongue to confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father." "Art thou then the Son of God?" would then be not so much a question as a mode of speaking which only added emphasis to persuasion; as much as to say, "Can I believe so glorious a truth? Is it possible that it can be real?" It would be adopting with still more expressive point and meaning, the exclamation of Nathaniel, "Thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel;" the confession of St. Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" the compellation of St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Another connection in which we may suppose these words, is the following: There is in man a strange capacity of entertaining religious truths, "with eyes that see not, ears that hear not, and a heart that will not understand." The scripture verities are not questioned; but they strike like blunted arrows, and cannot pierce the conscience. They are like faultless statues, complete in every part, but cold and motionless, the images at once of life and death. There is a physical sensation produced at times by immersion of the head in water, which much resembles this spiritual torpor: some lodgment in the orifice of the ear, or other effect of bathing, dulls the sense of hearing, and makes us feel altogether in a kind of dreamy state,

as if the objects around us were but the shadows of themselves, as if those well known words were nothing but the literal fact :

“ All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.”

Thus we continue in a half-waking state, till suddenly the bubble within and the bubble around us burst, the spell is loosed, the hallucination ceases, the ear drinks in the reality of clear sounds, and all nature is itself again. In such a manner does faith arouse the slumbering soul. It exhibits nothing but what it had in its dreams already seen. But it now exhibits them to awakened senses. The natural man is as one groping in a dark room. Such an one may range from object to object, he may feel them, and conjecture, sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly, what they are. But let the curtains be drawn aside, and the blessed light come in, and then he has a clear apprehension of all that he was imperfectly conversant with before. He then sees the rich and varied ornaments that surrounded him, and the brilliancy of the whole scene. What seemed but a worthless trifle, shines forth as a costly gem. What was to him a mere flat and unmeaning surface upon the wall, now exhibits itself as the triumph of the painter’s art, a treasure which none but the favoured few could

purchase. So it is that, when the inward vision of the soul is clouded, the realities of eternity, though notionally entertained, are, to every practical purpose, as though they were not. But, when the veil is taken off the heart, the Sun of righteousness shines out, and illuminates the whole horizon ; and object after object brightens into spirit and into life. It is in such a transition from darkness to light that we would imagine to ourselves the rapture with which the awakened spirit would exclaim, “ Art thou then the Son of God ? ”

With far different emotions might these words have been repeated by that celestial messenger whom we read of in the forty-third verse of this chapter : “ And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” How lately had this exalted being, perhaps, taken his station with the cherubim in their glittering ranks or with the “ bright seraphim in burning row,” or with whatever order of the celestial worshippers he might especially appertain to ; and there, in prostrate adoration, and with wings outstretched to cover his face, have united with all the company of heaven in crying unto Him that sat upon the throne, “ Holy, holy, holy ! ” But how little could even an angelic mind conceive the immensity of this transition ! How little could he measure the depths of the abyss of woe into which the King

of glory had descended from a throne so far above all heavens ! This angel, we will suppose, is summoned to go forth upon some embassy of mercy to this world of sorrow, and rejoices at the thought that he is now about to prop some fainting head, or still some throbbing heart ; and lo, he lights upon the spot to which his commission points. And often, perhaps, as he had ministered relief to human suffering, and had witnessed scenes of woe, yet an exhibition now meets his eyes to which he had beheld no parallel before : no sorrows that he had seen before were like unto that sorrow ; it was of deeper dye and keener anguish than them all. It was the case of one whose “visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” It was the case of one who looked in vain for any to pity Him or to comfort Him ; of one cut off from human sympathies, and an outcast from the divine compassions ; of one whom both earth and heaven had renounced, both God and man had forsaken. He finds Him in that dark hour, when even his lamb-like patience was driven to confess that “his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ;” when with strong cries and tears He prayed, that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him ; when He reiterated that cry, and when, “being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly ; and his

sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Now, what if this angel did not know, at first, who this mysterious stranger was; what if, through the veil, that is to say, his suffering flesh, a glory beyond that of men or angels began to emit its light, and to shine more and more, till full conviction reached this pure celestial mind. We know that there is nothing so touching to every generous feeling as the sight of fallen greatness—as earthly dignity brought down to bear with hardships, poverty, and contempt. How, then, would the heart of an angel beat with emotions too high for utterance at the sight of humbled Deity, at the glory of the eternal God-head fast bound in misery and trampled in the dust! With what mingled sensations, above our lower nature to conceive, might he have burst into the exclamation, "Art thou then the Son of God?"

Finally, with what ecstatic bliss will faithful souls repeat these words when they behold Him "whom not having seen they loved," now beaming forth in the effulgence of uncreated light, and seated on the throne of the Majesty on high! In Him they will recognise that condescending Saviour who did not disdain to visit them with his felt presence, to refresh their spirits, and to revive their hearts; to whom they often fled for sym-

pathy when the world neglected them and passed them by, when “men separated them from their company,” and said all manner of evil falsely for the Son of man’s sake; in whose converse they sought relief as in that of one who experimentally knew what the human heart can feel; who was himself “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” who bore the proud man’s contumely, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. With what rapture will they exclaim, when they see that Saviour seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, “Art thou then the Son of God?” “Yes,” they will say, “We believed that glorious truth when passing through the clouds below; but still it was often ours to pray, ‘Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.’ The thought was too good news, too great happiness to be true: we mistrusted our senses. At times we feared it was but the offspring of our own heart’s desire, the figment of a flattering dream. Then we saw through a glass darkly, but now face to face: then we knew in part, but now we know even as also we are known. Now our fondest hopes are realized; they are all the sober certainties of waking bliss. Yes, thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast loved

us and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

IX.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD THE ESSENCE OF SALVATION.

THAT great salvation which was the price and purchase of Emmanuel's blood, consists of two distinct parts:—1. He "delivered us from the wrath to come." He died in our place. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed." By the offering of himself He made reconciliation for us in heaven. He satisfied the divine justice, and cleared a channel for the divine compassions to flow down. He brought all God's attributes to harmonize and blend in man's salvation; so that "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Such was the great work wrought by

the Redeemer for us ; a work by which the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers.

2. But still, our justification before God would be but a mere negative thing, it would be but a mere escape from an outward hell, if the seeds of misery were left within us ; if there were not some remedy for the diseases, some cure for the maladies of the soul ; if there were no friendly hand to stop the throbbings of the heart, no soothing voice to say to the perturbations of man's anxious bosom, " Peace ; be still." Man wants more than to be freed from pain. He was made for happiness ; and he can find no rest without it. Indeed, it is idle to talk of neutrality as it respects our weal or woe. We are incapable of this blank existence. To us, the privation of enjoyment is the essence of misery. To us, separation from God is not simple loss. It is not the absence of good alone : it is the presence of all evil. It is not unconscious sleep, but a night of distracted dreams, wandering upon the dark mountains. amidst

" Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell."

The truth is, there is seated in the soul, bound up in the primitive constitution of man's being, a hungering and thirsting after uncreated good ; an

appetite for enjoyments pure and infinite, which, if mocked with counterfeits of bliss, if denied the bread of heaven and the water that springeth up into everlasting life, reacts upon itself and recoils upon the soul, and is, in fact, the true worm that dieth not, and fire that is not quenched.

Salvation, then, is not merely negative or relative: it is a positive and substantive thing; a real blessing and actual condition of the mind and heart. It is, in a word, precisely to the soul what health is to the body. But it is manifest that so mighty a work as that of man's moral renovation must admit of degrees, and exist in different stages of advancement. And thus, the Scriptures speak of babes in Christ, of young men, and of fathers.

Still, though capable in degree of more or less, there must be something in kind which constitutes salvation. There must be some definite line which separates between the evil and the good. What, then, is that line? How shall we "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not?" The question is not, observe, about the perfection, but about the essence of the thing. Nor, again, is the point in hand of a forensic kind: it is not salvation taken in the sense of "deliverance from the wrath to come," nor of ac-

ceptance with God. No: it is simply this: What is that moral condition, that character of the mind, that preparedness of the heart, that principle infused into the soul itself, which implies that, if we were at this moment taken into eternity, we should be happy? This question, I think, answered in that one sentence of our Lord's great intercessory prayer—"They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16). Whoso answers to this description, whatever may be his comparative state of ghostly strength or weakness, has the necessary qualification, and is "meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

We seem to be placed in the midst of a scheme of things which is the precise opposite of that in which holy and happy spirits live above. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," these form the prime elements of that which Scripture calls emphatically "the world." This compound of carnal grossness and artificial glare is essentially contrasted with the pure innocence and genial sunshine which gladden the path and rejoice the hearts of the blessed in heaven. The human mind, then, is so constructed that it cannot tend at once in contrary directions: it cannot choose things repugnant to each other; for "no man can serve two masters." "If any

man love the world," says St. John, "the love of the Father is not in him." Such is the trial to which we are exposed, the ordeal we have to pass, the test to which the temper and quality of our spiritual taste and tendencies are now put. On the one hand, a vain and voluptuous world opens out its imposing scenes of earthly honours, pomp, and glory, displays its soft enchantments, exhibits the most seductive objects to the fancy, flatters the senses, and invites the heart to "take its fill of pleasures." On the other hand appears, though faintly and upon the distant horizon, the dawn of a celestial day: disclosing, it is true, calmer and purer delights than earth can yield; displaying a softer landscape and more lovely scenes than those on which the sun of this world shines. But these are rather the "shadow of good things to come, than the very image of the things;" rather earnest of a future inheritance, than the inheritance itself. They are so far, nevertheless, first-fruits of the heavenly harvest, samples of the produce of the celestial soil, foretastes of the blessedness to come, as to serve the purpose I have before alluded to. They put to the test our fitness for those abodes of innocence and glory which the Scripture represents the habitations of the just to be. Thus, the great business of this life is to make our choice between

two rival candidates for the heart. The main point to be determined here is, to which of two systems of attraction we will yield the tendency of our souls. We are not gifted with self-support, nor are we formed to stand alone. We are mere adjectives, and to something substantive we must attach ourselves. To some current we must yield: against some supporting prop we must incline. We are, in the very essence of our being, dependent creatures. On what, then, shall we depend? "He that soweth to the flesh," says the apostle, "shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Here, then, is our salvation, or our ruin. Two attractions are at work. One would draw us up, and the other down. The cross and the world prefer at once their rival claims. The cross conjures us, by a Saviour's faithfulness and love, to turn to it; and points to the narrow way which leads to heaven. The world holds out her intoxicating cup of brilliancy and pleasure, and strews with flowers the broad and treacherous way which leadeth to destruction. Such is the option we have to make. But choose we must; and on that choice our everlasting weal or woe depends.

X.

THE CONNEXION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS A PROOF OF THE TRUTH OF REVELATION.

It has been observed, that the most startling objections to the truth of revelation turn over, on the fullest examination, to the side of its strongest evidences. Thus, the harsher traits of the divine administration, the sweeping desolations and wholesale massacres of which God's people are his appointed instruments—what does all this mysterious dispensation prove? That the Scriptures give a false representation of the divine nature, and therefore cannot be true? No: it shows, on the contrary, that the characters which the Old Testament attributes to Jehovah are not fictitious ones, but precisely those which have been in all ages displayed by that invisible Providence which rules the world. It is “at his word the stormy wind ariseth.” It is by his command that earthquakes, famines, plagues, and pestilence spare neither age nor sex, neither tender mothers nor their helpless infants. Well, then, what is all this but the very same harshness of administration, carried on by unseen agency, in which, according to the sacred history, a visible and human machinery is employed? Nor let it be said, “O,

but there is a difference between these two. Angels, or whatever ministering spirits God may be pleased to send as executioners of his wrath, may be so constituted that to bear such stern commissions and to inflict such woes may not re-act upon themselves, and impart a character of ferocity to their minds ; whereas, man is so formed that he assimilates to the work in which he is habitually engaged, whether it be to save or to destroy." But, even if this principle did apply to the exterminating Jew, and that the sense that he acted by divine command, and was not a voluntary but necessitated agent ; if this, and other correctives of a system so replete with mercy, did not altogether counteract this tendency, yet, does not the acknowledged Sovereign, who sends plague and pestilence, employ, not by a word of command from heaven, but by his all-directing providence—does He not, I say, employ man as the instrument of man's destruction ? Who that believes there is a God can doubt that it was his hand which let loose the northern deluge upon the Roman empire, and that bared the bosom of America to the Spaniard's sword ? These are the present mysteries of an inscrutable Providence : these are the clouds which now intercept our view, but which will, at the appointed season, clear away, when all is lost in one bright and universal

blaze of evidence that "God is love." But still these darker lines of the divine administration answer, amongst others, this valuable purpose: they identify the character of God, as set forth in the Scripture, with the character of God as witnessed by the phenomena which we see around us. They enable us to take up the language of the apostle, and to say to the objector, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is he not of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also."

If we wanted arguments to prove, what is as clear as proof can make it, that the Old and New Testaments are a true revelation, there is one which comes with peculiar force to my own mind. It is this: What could induce the authors of the latter to identify their system with the former, but a firm conviction that it was of God? What could induce them to refer to it as inspired, and to make themselves responsible for it; to implicate themselves, and make common cause, with an institution in many respects so wholly at variance with their own? What but an assurance that, though clouds and darkness might rest upon it, it was nevertheless divine? Compare the simple and spiritual worship of the Gospel with the gorgeous and pompous ceremonial of the Jewish ritual. Compare the lives of the Old Testament saints, their multiplication of wives and

concubines, with the spotless purity which the New Testament enjoins. Compare the bloody wars and vaunting triumphs of Israel over its prostrate foes, with the non-resistance, the long-suffering, the love of enemies, which the Gospel breathes in every page; and then account for it, if you can, why the Author of the Christian religion, his apostles and evangelists, should have encumbered themselves with a vast machinery apparently so little to their purpose, so practically opposed to the main points they had to carry, so repugnant to the philosophy of the world and to the prejudices of those Gentiles to whom it was their object to preach the Gospel? What, I say but madness could have induced them (if, as some allege, they were benevolent forgers of a pious fraud) to have allied themselves to, and entangled themselves with, a system which could only clog the wheels of their undertaking, and retard its motion; nay, to all human appearance, forbid the possibility of its advance? Will it be said that the object was merely to conciliate the Jews? This might indeed be urged, if the originators of the new dispensation had not shown that they were ready to encounter death rather than make one single compromise with the prejudices of that people. How is it possible, then, that men so holy, so heavenly, so strictly vera-

cious, should build the very foundation of their system upon falsehood, and this in order to conciliate those whose favour they would in no other instance sacrifice one jot or tittle of principle to secure? But will it still be argued, in spite of all this, that the apostles, though lovers of truth, found it so essential to the new religion to engraft it on the predictions of the old, that, in this one particular, they yielded to expediency at the expense of right, and thus fabricated a scheme which seemed to correspond to, and fulfil the Jewish prophecies? Absurd as such a notion altogether is, yet, if even for a moment we could entertain it, we might expect to find that there would be some pains taken to disentangle the prophecies from the context in which they are found. I mean so far as to show that Christianity, though founded on the former, had no concord nor agreement with the latter. Such would naturally be the wish and the endeavour of men circumstanced as this hypothesis contemplates, of persons who were the fabricators of a system of purity, holiness, and charity, grounded by a pious fraud (if such a case were possible) on the prophecies of the Old Testament. Such men would, doubtless, have been anxious to vindicate themselves from the charge of adopting, in the lump, that scheme of which the prophecies formed a part. They

would have disclaimed all connexion with its bloody sacrifices, its gorgeous ritual, its ministrations of death. There would be elaborate explanations, at least, on these topics. There would be something to indicate that they were felt to be weak points, and that the case stood in need of some apology. But nothing of the kind appears; and it is on this fact that I rest my argument. I repeat it, that nothing can satisfactorily account for the manner in which the originators and writers of the New Testament appeal to the Old, but a certain knowledge and unhesitating conviction upon their part that the latter was a divine economy, "whose builder and maker was God."

XI.

THE WORLD COMPARED TO A SPIDER'S WEB.

A CELEBRATED historian has observed that no instance has been recorded in which an army has ventured to ford a river, in front of an enemy, without coming off victorious. If this be true, it may, in a great measure, be accounted for, not only by the bravery which such a movement indicates, but by the resistless impetus which the effort itself imparts. It seems, indeed, in the usual course of providence, that all important discoveries, all great undertakings for the advance-

ment of science or the benefit of mankind, should pass through some medium of discouragement, before they make their way to an established position in the world. And this is wisely ordered. It puts the genuineness of new plans and systems to a test. It secures society from being overcharged with novelties, perplexed with crude inventions and idle theories. All such schemes are met, at first, by an opposition which tries their strength. They have to pass through an ordeal of resistance, through which, without intrinsic energy, they cannot force their way. And thus, what is spurious and abortive perishes in the birth: it dies by its own exhaustion, and thereby saves society the trouble of examining its claims, and relieves public opinion from the pains of becoming its executioner.

This may explain to us, in a measure, why it is that we have been placed in this system of things around us; why an immortal spirit should be destined to pass through such a medium as this world in its progress to eternity. It is to put it to the very test which I have already described. It is that the society of the blessed above may consist of none but genuine members, faithful souls, loyal spirits, soldiers who have fought a good fight, have borne the cross, and won the crown. "These are they," says the elder to St. John, "which came

out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.) What, then, is that which the scripture emphatically styles "the world?" It is, as it were, a web of sin and vanity woven by Satan himself. And this web is spread across the road which leads from earth to heaven, to catch, to entangle, and to destroy the souls which would pass from hence to a better country. But what he intends for destruction, God overrules for needful and salutary probation. This dense and resisting medium is the great instrument of our trial. It stands between us and the land of inheritance which lies before us; and pass through it we must, if we would reach that blessed country. But do all succeed in the attempt? Do all even make the effort? Alas, no! The far greater part yield to the resistance, and with contented indolence lie entangled in the web, and perish in the snare. Thus does this world present to the eyes of invisible spectators a ghastly sight, like that of the insect's web; a texture rich in spoils, set thick, and teeming with the dying and the dead.

A few there are, however, and have been in all ages, who have sought and found deliverance; a few chosen spirits of ethereal mould; a band of conquerors, who have held on their way and

But many may admire these words, and yet feel unable to ascend the heights on which we blend our devotions with those of celestial worshippers. "How," they say, "are we to attain to this blessed state, and to lay hold upon this great salvation?" I answer first by prayer—by fervent, humble, persevering prayer; and secondly by endeavouring to lead a "godly, righteous, and sober life." To this latter my text applies; and, therefore, to this consideration I shall now confine myself. "And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." This most practical and important doctrine is set forth elsewhere abundantly in scripture. It is the theme to which our blessed Saviour himself frequently recurs. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." These are most encouraging passages.

They seem to tell us, that, while we should pray without ceasing for things above us, there are, nevertheless, duties, daily and hourly duties, which for the present we can by divine grace perform, and in the performance of which we can please God; that, though the summit on which eternal sunshine dwells may appear far distant, nevertheless there is a pathway thither on which we can now set out, and which leads by gradual steps to that inviting eminence; that impossibilities, or things above us, are not required of us; that God does not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed; that we are not called on to “ascend into heaven, (that is, to bring Christ down from above,) for the word is nigh us, even in our mouth, and in our heart,” saying, “Lo, this is the way, walk ye in it.”

This morning, upon waking, the thought suddenly occurred to me—What if I should pass this day better than I have ever passed a day before; what if I should be able to look back at night, and to thank God for the most profitable and best spent day of my whole life! The very idea was animating beyond expression. And why should not this be the first thought which presents itself to us every morning?

Our span of life is divided into these lesser portions, that each should be a kind of miniature of

life, that the morning should be an image of youth, and that, if we have not been so happy as to devote our first years to God, we may make the best compensation in our power by dedicating to him our earliest hours. Bishop Kenn says, "make my very dreams devout." And surely if, while we utterly abhorred all thoughts of any justifying righteousness in ourselves, we so lived that as each sun descended it might leave us with a parting smile—that as the night approached the closing day might seem almost to whisper, "Well done, good and faithful servant:—we might not only lie down in peace, but hope for dreams, if dreams were sent, of purity, of heaven, and of brighter scenes to come. How far this great salvation is attainable here below, let us not waste our time with efforts theoretically to define; but let us rather resolve to try the experiment ourselves. Let us put to practical proof at what degrees of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost we may, even when burdened with the flesh, arrive. And for this purpose let us store our memories with chosen texts of scripture; and let us often repeat them to our own hearts, and more particularly when we awake from the refreshment of sleep. I mean such passages as "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth:" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see

God :” “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Surely these animating calls, these enlivening motives, these precious promises, are not held up to view that they may mock and tantalize the appetites of the soul. No ; there is a rest which remaineth even here for the people of God ; there is a haven to which they may fly—a pavilion in which they may be hidden from the provoking of all men and from the strife of tongues. And thus shall every one that seeks find the truth of that faithful saying—“To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.”

But the full salvation of God we shall not behold till we see with other than these eyes of flesh and blood. That glorious day is yet to come when in higher strains than those of David the celestial choirs will sing, “The Lord hath made known his salvation : his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of” angels and of men. There is implanted in our original constitution a thirst for glory ; an appetite of which brilliancy of display and splendour of exhibition are the appropriate objects and connatural food. Here counterfeits of true glory, shadows of the bright substances above, are suffered to blind the eyes of them that believe not, and to mock the vision of

those who walk by sight and not by faith. But "to him that ordereth his conversation aright" God will shew greater things than these. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," the glories which will one day burst upon our view, when we behold the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; when, "out of the celestial Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined;" when he who maketh his enemies his footstool, receives the diadem from his eternal Father, and all the host of heaven unite in the universal chorus, "Crown him, crown him Lord of all." O what scenes will open upon the soul when we behold the angels "clad in robes of virgin white;" the saints with their crowns of gold; the martyrs with garlands around their brows, and palms of victory in their hands; the innocents going forth to meet the conquering soldiers of the cross with hymns, the celestial counterpart of those purest songs of earth, when God out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ordaineth strength! What bliss will it be to look round and see joy in every face, to hear no sighs, to discern no heavings of the bosom, no tears that trickle down the cheeks, no looks which tell of rooted sorrows in the heart! And amongst this happy group, what bliss will it be again to behold those relatives and friends

whose loss had weaned us from the world—to feel that this reunion is a waking certainty, and not the mockery of a dream—to know that we have at last reached that happy country into which no enemy shall ever enter, and from which no friend shall ever depart! Such is the blessedness which awaits the faithful servant of his God, the man that ordereth his conversation aright.

XIII.

ON THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

“And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.” Luke v. 11.

These are the concluding words of a most interesting occurrence, the whole of which let us proceed to review. Were we to indulge in fancies, we might imagine that we saw internal evidence of St. Luke’s profession, as a painter, in the picturesque beauty of his descriptions: “And it came to pass that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.” (ver. 1, 2.) Suppose this all presented to the eye, and there

cannot be a more interesting picture. The circumstance of our Lord's preaching from the water denotes that the day was serene, and the lake in soft repose. Two ships, anchored in safety, and undisturbed by a breath of wind, stand in, close to the shore. The fishermen, who had gone out of them, were now in the very attitude which a painter would desire—washing their nets. Along the fields, which gently rose from the margin of the water, numbers were pressing down, and a rural congregation were collecting to hear the word of God. To give this anxious multitude the opportunity they sought, and to gain a point from which his voice could reach them all, our Lord resolves to avail himself of his position, and erect his pulpit on the bosom of the water. “And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship” (ver. 3). He thus freed himself from the pressure of the crowd, amidst which his voice would have been inaudible; and from the inclination of the ground he had the whole assembly ranged before him. But our Lord designed on this occasion to teach not only by words, but by deeds and miraculous signs, and to make the great abyss the scene of his operations: “When he had left speaking, he said unto Simon,

Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." (ver. 4.)

Our Lord's command to his disciples, first of all, to thrust out a little from the land, and then to launch out into the deep, may suggest to us some important lessons. It is thus that he would gradually wean our hearts and affections from the world. One wholly ignorant of naval affairs imagines that the vessel is in safety in proportion as it is near the shore; but the experienced mariner knows that he is never so safe as when he "occupies his business in great waters;" and that where there is good sea-room he may dismiss his fears. It is thus that the heart is naturally disposed to cling to those things in which all its dangers lie, and to look for happiness to the real causes of its misery. As the body is but the grosser copy of the mind, and shadows forth its wants, its desires, its appetites, and is, in fact, in the world of matter, what its better part is in the world of spirits, so do corporeal and mental maladies exhibit corresponding features. The languid sufferer, immured in his sick chamber, dreads the contact of the open day, and shrinks from the soft breath of heaven, as if death, and not health, were in the breeze. And thus it is in the moral distempers of our nature: we love our chains, and

shrink back from the hand which would set us free. We resemble the legion who besought our Saviour, "that he would not command them to go out into the deep." We had rather, like them, that he would suffer us to enter into the herd of swine; we would bury ourselves in flesh; we would encircle ourselves with creatures; we would close the windows, and kindle our own tapers, and shut out the eternal day, and the light of the everlasting sun. But still the counsels of religion, and the calls of conscience, and the commands of God, urge us to quit the shore, and launch out into the deep. But how are we to obey this call? Let us first be sure that we understand its meaning; and let us be assured that it is no harsh nor unfriendly voice. It is not the voice of one who desires to distress us, or to do violence to our feelings. No, it is the invitation of one who wills our happiness, and who alone can know how that happiness is to be attained. He does not forbid us to love those objects who are dear to us as our own souls, or freely to enjoy the blessings he bestows; but he does forbid a too close adhesion, or giving our whole hearts, to them. This is the anchoring to the shore from which he would free the soul. He is himself that mighty deep into which he would launch the vessel. There she

may let loose her sails, and open all her canvass to the breeze, and fear no rocks beneath, nor tempests from above.

Let us then learn from this passage to keep the first and great commandment, and to give the unbounded affections of the soul to God alone. This it is which sets all things right, and puts every thing in its due position. The heart is then lodged in that safe shelter, and rests upon the only bed where it can find repose. Nor does the first supersede or make void the second commandment, which is like unto it, and flows from it as its native fountain. No, it establishes that law, and turns that sweet precept into a blessing, inferior only to itself: it separates the thorn from the flower, and frees the tenderest affections from all their penalties and pains: it enables us to commit all we love, as well as all we are, into the hands of him who withholdeth no good thing from those that trust in Him.

XIV.

PART II.

NOTHING can be more natural than the apparent unwillingness of Simon to undergo new labours, after a fatiguing night of unavailing effort. Nor can we fail to admire how this reluctance was

overruled by implicit obedience, and by simple faith. Ver. 5: "And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." How many might these discouraging hours of fruitless pain remind of religious services without felt comfort; of prayers without life, without unction, without wing to rise to, or answer returned from, heaven! How many could say of the season of devotion, "What a weariness is it!" How many reckon the tedious minutes as they pass; and, when the welcome close draws near, feel relieved by the thought that a necessary duty has been discharged! How many congratulate themselves that conscience will no longer dog them, and whisper in their ears, "Pay me that thou owest:" "remember you have not said your prayers!" Uncomfortable as such a state may be, let us ever shun those evil counsellors whose language is, "These prayers are worse than none: it is better to offer no sacrifice than such a mockery as this." On the contrary, prayer is a command of God; and it is our duty to pray, though the exercise may, for a time, be dry and comfortless and barren. If we cannot call forth the sweet flow of the affections, and love God with the sensible emotions of the heart, let us love him with the mind, with the understanding,

and with the strength ; and offer to him at least a reasonable service. If we cannot delight ourselves in approaching God, let us resolve on being sincere and in earnest while we do so. Let us aim at calm fixedness of thought ; and, in spite of much wandering, let us persevere. Let us pray earnestly, that we may be enabled to pray affectionately ; and, though we may be long without the answer we desire, it will come at last, and will not tarry. We may toil all the night, and take nothing ; yet, remembering the exhortation of him who taught that “man ought always to pray, and not to faint,” let us say, “Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” Let us persevere in this spirit of patience and of hope, and we shall, ere long, be abundantly rewarded.

Ver. 6: “And, when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes ; and their net brake.” Alas, there is always some flaw, some want, something to remind us that this is not our rest, in every human blessing. As we find the rich man, when his wealth poured in with unexpected plenty, not filled with joy but harassed with anxiety ; saying, “What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ?” so these poor fishermen were likely to gain nothing by their unusual success but the spoiling of their nets. Without new efforts and new aid all would

have been lost. Ver. 7 : “ And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.” Here again new perils arise, and all proceeding from what would be termed their good fortune. Behold, then, a lively image of those dangers which await the soul when, after long and toilsome waiting, it receives new light and life, and that abundantly, from the fountain of the grace of God. At this happy crisis, we are “ like them that dream : ” “ our mouth ” is “ filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.” Nevertheless, this bright season is not unattended by its peculiar dangers. By this season, I mean no less than the first conversion of a wandering soul to God ; I mean that crisis of its history, and that auspicious moment, when it rises out of darkness into marvellous light ; when the veil is thrown aside, and scenes unknown before start into view ; when old things are passed away, and all things are become new. The heart is then purged from its dross : the mists of impurity disperse : the drag-chain is taken from off the soul ; and it now runs—nay flies, as upon angel’s wings, in the way of God’s commandments. Such is the happiness of one who finds out God ; such are his “ joy and peace in believing ; ” when the days of his espou-

sals are come, and when he sits down as a bride at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

Nevertheless, the effervescence of this new wine is fraught with no small danger to the fragile vessel which contains it. The glad surprise at something so wholly unknown before; the novelty of those interests which now occupy the soul; the effect of light for the first time shining into the dark places of the soul—these often produce a kind of spiritual intoxication, far removed from the sobriety and moderation and self-denial which are so essential in the Christian life. We think our hill so strong that it never will be moved. On this mount of transfiguration we forget that we are not yet in heaven. We hug this bright cloud, and dream that sin and sorrow have fled away for ever! till we are sent down again into the vale of tears, to learn those lessons of patience and humility which we had well-nigh forgotten. Thus do we resemble the fishermen of Galilee when “their net brake,” or rather when “they began to sink.” Thus should we, even when spiritual consolations abound, remember that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Thus should we watch and pray against those temptations which heaven’s best gifts may bring. Thus should he “that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Thus should the Christian

keep in view, that conversion is not salvation; and that he that girdeth on his harness should not boast himself as he that putteth it off.

XV.

PART III.

It may be truly said of man; in his unconverted state, that "he fears where no fear is;" while to the dread realities of impending ruin he is as insensible as the sleeping infant. And thus it was that neither the sinking of the ship into the deep waters, nor the descent of his own soul into the abyss below them, were the apprehensions which then filled the mind of Peter with alarm. No: he dreaded the power of him who alone could save him. He "feared and trembled" for all the goodness and all the prosperity which he had shown him. "When Simon Peter saw it"—not the peril of the ship, but his own miraculous success—"he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken." (Luke v. 8, 9.) Strange, that weakness should fly from the shelter of omnipotence; that indigence should turn away from fulness, ever

ready to dispense; that sinners should shun the presence of Him who came down from heaven to save them, and to bless them. But so it is.

There is (not bound up in the original essence, but) superinduced upon the nature of every soul derived from Adam, a deep instinctive sense that God and all his attributes are against us, and not for us. And thus man—formed for God; fitted by the finest correspondence of all that he is to all that God is, to repose in Him, and Him alone; panting after some satisfying good, some pure fountain of unmingled bliss, some good to fill his boundless appetites—all which are but different names for the sufficiency and fulness of the divine nature—thus man flies from his resting place and his home, and refuses to hear that voice which invites him to “take the water of life freely,” and to eat of that bread which came down from heaven; without money and without price.

What intelligence, looking down from a better world—what stranger to the history of man’s perversion could have witnessed the scene which is here presented, without mingled sentiments of surprise and horror? The blessed Jesus had just performed a miracle of pure beneficence. He had so shaped and associated this miracle as to evince the most amiable, friendly, and familiar interest in the concerns and circumstances of Peter.

He had taken a share in the conduct of his daily business, and brought his omnipotence to bear upon the management of his humble traffic. The mighty power thus manifested had been put forth only for his good. The awful display of a super-human agency was mitigated and softened by the condescension of familiar friendship. At such a moment we find this favoured mortal at Jesus' knees. He was now where angels would think it heaven to be. He was in the presence of him who had just proved himself both willing and able to shower the richest benefits upon him. He was at those knees which had often bent in prayer for him. And what are the accents which we hear? Is it the voice of implicit confidence, of deep-toned gratitude, of heartfelt praise? Is it, "Lord I will follow thee to prison and to death?" Is it, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom?" No. It is, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Strange infatuation! Wondrous delusion! And yet such is the voice of nature, or rather of man's apostacy from the primitive constitution of that nature. For what is madness, if this language does not speak it? It is, in a concise and summary form, to say, "By this miracle I know 'thee who thou art, the holy One of God.' To thee only it appertaineth to forgive sins; and therefore, because I am a sinner,

and because I need thy help, thy pardon, and thy mercy, I beseech thee to leave me to myself. Leave me to my miseries, and to my sins. Leave me a little longer to the sensual dreams of nature, to forget my danger, and to say, ‘Peace, peace, where there is no peace.’ Leave me for one brief moment more to close the windows of this chamber of death, to shut out the eternal day, and to fancy that this world, unsatisfying and wretched though I feel it, will last for ever.” O, how many, unknown to themselves, virtually and practically offer up this mockery of prayer ! Their lips go one way and their hearts another. They confess God’s name, but they hate his holiness, and are alien from his nature. They call him Master and Lord, but there is an under current to the supplication which they make. It is silent, but God can hear it. It is hidden from the petitioners themselves, but God can see it. It is, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

The glimpse of Godhead, which this disciple caught in the miracle before us, filled him with sudden amaze and horror. And why ? Because he was not yet brought within the bonds of that covenant which reunites the soul to its parent source, and restores it to a state of filial relationship to the Father of spirits. Let us then seek, through a Saviour’s merits, this prime blessing,

this high distinction, this glorious elevation to the rank of “sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.” Then to draw nigh unto God, and for God to draw nigh unto us, will be our deep consolation in the days of sorrow, and our crown of rejoicing in all our happier hours. “Thou God seest me,” will be inscribed in living characters on all around us. It will be as a token upon our hands, and frontlets between our eyes. His presence will be the star that guides us through the labyrinth of life: the sun that warms and cheers us on our passage through this weary world. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,” will be our song in the land of our pilgrimage; till faith is lost in vision, and the scattered rays of light which reach this world below, merge in that full blaze of glory which fills the courts of God’s house above.

XVI.

PART IV.

THE consternation—for such the original term may well imply—which seized the mind of Peter, at the miraculous draught of fishes, was not con-

finned to him alone: it was common to all who witnessed it. Those that were in his own ship with him were “astonished,” or filled with dread; “And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon.” (v. 10.) Bound together in the same bundle of life as were these three apostles, Peter, James, and John, we recognize in the history of their partnership the ascending nature and rising character of that kingdom to which they were called; a system which, commencing as a grain of mustard-seed, becomes a great tree, “sending out her boughs unto the sea, and the branches unto the river;” which, at first, but as the early dawn, “shines more and more unto the perfect day” of boundless prevalence and universal light. These associates “in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling;” these joint-sharers in the paltry profits of an uncertain, wearisome, and servile traffic; how transformed do we, ere long, behold them, and to what a glorious height ascended! Are these poor fishermen, buffeting with the waves, toiling all the night, and taking nothing—are these the heroes whom we shall soon see filled with the Holy Ghost, armed with the power of God, casting out devils, treading on serpents, and scorpions, and driving the principalities of hell before them? Are these the three witnesses,

who were not to taste of death till they had seen the veil removed, and the secrets of the invisible world disclosed; the Saviour arrayed in his royal robes of light; and his saints clothed in their celestial bodies, and “talking with him” in glory? Yes: but we shall see them advanced to loftier heights than these. We shall see them, not as witnesses, but as sharers in the honours of Moses and Elias; nay, taking rank as those who “are greater than they.” It is true we cannot now behold them thus highly exalted, but we shall behold them afterwards. We shall see them in the chief places, and on distinguished seats, amidst the glorious company of the apostles. We shall recognize them decked with their unfading crowns, amidst the noble army of the martyrs. We shall behold them eating and drinking at Christ’s table in his kingdom, and sitting, as his assessors, on their thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. Though we see them not now, yet there they are. And often, perhaps, do they compare their present partnership in glory with that which once subsisted between them upon the lake of Galilee. Often do they call to mind the nets and fishing-boats in which they were sharers; and remember when they went out together to brave the hazards of the sea, and committed themselves to the providence of God for the only supply—

the only riches which they sought—namely, the capture of a few fishes.

But the apostles were not called at once to this rest in glory : they were still to labour, though in a noble field. “ Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” And here, without presuming to propose it as anything beyond a suggestion, to be adopted or dismissed from the thoughts as best may suit the peculiar temperament of each mind, I would say, that this last expression, “ thou shalt catch men,” savours much of a characteristic manner, not a little remarkable in the person of the blessed Jesus. I scarce know what to call it. Perhaps we should not go wrong in describing it as a dignified and chastened pleasantry. We see a glimpse of this amiable condescension, when, to the question, “ Master, where dwellest thou ?” he answers, “ Come and see.” We catch somewhat of the same gracious affability, as well as of the magic power of his voice, when he turned his mourning disciple’s sorrow into joy by simply repeating “ Mary.” Nay, from amidst the agonies of the cross, do we not hear the same voice, as it were unchanged, speaking as never man spake, while saying to his mother, “ Woman, behold thy son !” and to the disciple whom he loved, “ Behold thy mother !”

One who had lost a much-beloved son told me, that, upon his protracted bed of death, there was nothing that so pierced her heart, as the playfulness with which he sometimes spoke. He, the most affectionate of children, had been in the habit of using words and phrases of fond endearment to his parent. And when these expressions came from his dying lips, while pain and patience were struggling for ascendancy upon his pallid countenance, the sharpest of all her trials was, she said, the exhibition of childish simplicity which he then presented. This it was which had most power to wound, and to engage her heart. If, then, we take the view proposed of the last address of the Saviour, to those He loved most on earth, can his infinite amiability be displayed in more irresistibly attractive colours?

It was thus that He "caught men." When He commanded us then to love Him with all our hearts, He imposed on us no duty for the performance of which He did not supply abundant materials, and means. He knew what was in man; because, within his own pure breast there dwelt and beat a human heart. He knew that no *command* could cause the voluntary stream of love to flow. He knew that nothing could call forth love but the manifestation of an object, such as God had formed the affections of the heart to

cleave to. It was thus that He made provision for the salvation of all who believe in Jesus : for that true salvation which essentially consists in the fulfilment of the first and great commandment.

Such was the net which He cast into this sea of troubles. And on this account it was that He sent his apostles forth, that they might, in their lesser degree, promote his kingdom, by exhibiting in their own persons the image of his perfections.

To learn these lessons, and to copy from his bright example, “When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him.”

XVII.

ON HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS.

“In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live.”—2 KINGS xx. 1.

“WHOM the Lord loveth He chasteneth.” And surely we cannot have a more forcible comment upon this truth, than the present condition of this excellent man. Sickness unto death, and all which that implies—and this, as the sixth verse would intimate, not after the destruction of the

Assyrian, with which the foregoing chapter ends, but amidst all the horrors of the siege: such were the complicated trials which pressed together upon the soul and body of this faithful servant of the Lord. At such a moment it was that the prophet Isaiah was commissioned with these solemn tidings, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

The point which claims our attention for the present is this—that Hezekiah is warned to prepare for death, not by adjusting his spiritual affairs and ordering the concerns of his soul, but by making a deliberate arrangement of his worldly circumstances, and an equitable disposal of his property. The message is not "set thy soul," but "set thine house in order." It seems taken for granted that the greater interest, the one thing needful, had been habitually attended to; that it had been the main business of life, and had not been deferred to a dying hour. There cannot perhaps be a better test of our sincerity, or surer criterion whether our hearts are right with God, than the following:—Suppose we were to receive such a message as Hezekiah did; suppose the announcement were still more definite, and that it were told us by a voice from heaven that this day week or this day fortnight would be the last of our days on earth, what would be the effect

upon our minds? I do not mean, indeed it would be presumptuous, to say how much of alarm nature might or might not feel; what awe might or might not solemnize the spirit, so as to bring eternity before us with an interest more overwhelming and absorbing than we had experienced before. Much of this would, I believe, depend on constitutional turn and temperament of mind. Nor will I deny that such a summons might demand, just as the sabbath does, more than an ordinary portion of our time to be devoted to immediate acts and exercises of religion. For, says the wise man, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." And even for appearance sake, it would not become the holiest saint to pass what he knew would be his last week or fortnight upon earth, precisely with the same liberty that he might think it allowable to use in the ordinary course of life. In these respects, however, I believe the difference would be far less than we are disposed, on a cursory view, to think. For, in the first place, as to prayer and such exercises, it does not follow that a man *can* fill up every interval of leisure with these holy offices and this high employ. It is not merely time; the best of men, alas, will often want internal supplies for direct devotion, and

feel no power to ascend upon the wings of prayer and praise.

And, in the next place, can there be any sin against which the sincerely religious man does not as heartily resolve, as he would do if death were staring him in the face? Surely not. No one can be in a state of grace, or filial relationship to God, who does not from his soul abjure all sin. However we may fail in the execution, if this be not the fixed intention of the mind, our religion is vain. Whatever the past may have been, and though broken resolutions, though the wrecks and ruins of our choicest vows may strew the road we have travelled up to the present hour; for all this there is free forgiveness to those who fly for pardon to the blood of Jesus. But, if we would fly to that only refuge, we must utterly renounce the trespasses and forswear the sins which brought us there. The near prospect of eternity then can make no change in this respect with the sincere believer.

It is true that, if hitherto we have been impenitent, the approach of death might be overruled, by the sovereign grace of God, as the instrument of our conversion; or it might, as, alas, is far more likely, frighten us into making a hollow truce with heaven. But if we are *repentant* sinners, and if the very essence of repentance be the

renunciation of all sin, how could death, though brought home to our very door, make any material difference in this point—nay, how could it make the slightest difference? For what can be added to that which is perfect and entire? Nothing, in fact, can be more diametrically opposed to the very life and being of religion than to stand before God in the following position, and thus to address the Almighty in the language not of the lips but of the heart—“O God, if thou shouldst spare my life, and continue me in health, and guard me from the ten thousand snares which threaten this frail tenement, I will not lay down my arms nor return to my allegiance; I will not cease to violate thy commandments, and trample on thy laws. Though thy presence is all around me, yet, because it is not forced upon my senses, I utterly disregard it. I avail myself of that awful power of self-delusion which I find within me, to ‘say in my heart, There is no God,’ or at least to say, ‘How doth God know? He hideth his face; He will never see it.’ If indeed I knew that I should in a few days be stripped of the covering of that darkness which I love, and forced into that light which I abhor, that I should be dragged into the felt presence of my Judge, and see the face of God with eyes which no alienation of the heart can close, then indeed I should reform, and

set about the work of preparation, and lay aside those sins which (with God's assistance) I will keep so long as I can detain this spirit in captivity, and sleep in the night, and hope against hope that the morning will never come. I will disregard the distant thunder of God's threatenings. I will despise the invitations of his mercy. I will steel my heart against his gentleness, his patience, his long-suffering, his paternal goodness, his unbounded love ; still depending upon Him alone to give me timely notice, and to watch and guard the avenues of death, lest that king of terrors should approach me unawares."

How dreadful does this delusion, when clothed in the language of the lips, appear ! And yet such is substantially the state of every man who resolves that he will perform any action, or indulge himself in any gratification from which he would abstain, as contaminating or unlawful, were sentence of immediate death pronounced against him. It is needless to say to those who know God's truth, that such vain notions imply a radical misconception of the very nature of the spiritual system. The delusion is total and entire. It seems to suppose that God is so confined to heaven that there is no God *here*. It implies the idea that heaven and hell are mere localities, and that the soul will be shipped off to the one or the other

just as it has gone through or not gone through certain arbitrary forms which the law directs as necessary passports to the better country. In short, as the apostle says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto Him: neither can He know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Religion can be seen only by its own light; and none but the religious man can understand what religion is. Its theory may be intellectually grasped by others, just as a blind man may be taught the science and abstract doctrine of light and colours. But as to the thing itself, and that which the theory is all about, here the carnal mind is precisely like him who conceived that scarlet resembled the sound of a trumpet. Hence the strange errors into which Christians, so called, are apt to fall; hence half the collisions which distract the religious world; hence the angry controversies between high church and low church, while, in the sight of God, where such furious passions rage, there is *no* church. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision," neither form, on the one hand, "availeth anything, nor uncircumcision," nor a ceaseless crying out against form, on the other hand, "but a new creature"—but "faith that worketh by love"—but "keeping the commandments of God."

XVIII.

THE PARALYTIC HEALED.

“Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.” Matt.
ix. 6.

THE paralytic man, whose miraculous cure is related in this chapter, may represent to us the stages through which a soul passes, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

In the first instance, we find him “sick of the palsy, lying on a bed.” (v. 2.) In this indolent and listless posture we have a picture of the sinner, drowned in the sleep of a mere sensual life and animal existence. Steeped in indulgence, “enclosed in his own fat,” and haunted by no compunctious visitings, “as the door turneth upon its hinges” so does he roll upon his bed of sin. A “lover of pleasures more than a lover of God,” he has no conception of any enjoyment but what arises from the gratification of the flesh; no ambition which soars above the honour which cometh from man. And if he attains the objects to which alone his anxieties aspire; if he can eat, drink, and be merry; if he is in friendship with the world, and all men speak well of him; if the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of

life are fed to the full, and his pulse beats high with animal buoyancy and vigour, he may fancy, for a time, that this is happiness. At any rate, there are no conflicting elements in his case. All is of a piece. Death and judgment, heaven and hell, God and eternity—all thoughts of these are quite shut out. No disturber has come in between the sinner and his sins. These are the only pleasures that he has, the only pleasures he desires. These are the Delilahs on whose lap he rests; the bed on which he sleeps, and dreams that he is happy.

But when, in mercy, God alarms the soul; when conscience thunders at the door, and awakes the sinner from his slumbers, those sins on which he reposed before, and in which he found his sole enjoyment, now become his burden and his misery. A voice is heard to say—"Arise, take up thy bed." That couch on which he willingly lay down, he now unwillingly carries, as a painful load. He is now no longer "alive without the law." His natural liberty has fled: the free enjoyment of the animal life is over. A disturbing principle has been introduced, and mingles with all the processes of his soul. "The commandment has come:" the terrors of the law have passed before his view: the light has dawned; and yet "not light, but rather darkness visible:" the nature of

true happiness has been seen, but seen only that it may tantalize and mock the appetites of the soul. In this state, loving righteousness, panting after holiness, and, at the same time, "serving divers lusts and passions," does every one who carries the load of sin exclaim, with the apostle, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

At length, we find the object of this miraculous cure arriving at "his own house," and there laying down his bed. And thus do those who travail and are heavy laden, and who are grieved and wearied with the burden of their sins, at length find rest unto their souls. But, to carry on the figure, how shall the sinner be said to depart to "his own house?" It may doubtless signify the final and only full deliverance out of all the miseries of this sinful world at the hour of death; and to such the apostle looked, as the bright consummation of all his hopes: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." (2 Cor. v. 1, 2.) But there is a subordinate and more immediate sense in which the penitent may be represented, at the command and by the aid of

the great Physician, as departing to his own house. This house may signify his own interior. While living in sin, he was driven from his proper centre. An alien from his own bosom, a fugitive from himself; afraid to think and unwilling to reflect; shunning the voice of conscience, which still pleaded in the desecrated sanctuary of his own soul, his great object was to keep abroad, and to wander to and fro in a far country. But the sinner, when reconciled to God, is reconciled to himself. He is no longer ejected from his home within. Like the prodigal in the gospel, he comes to himself. His happiest moments are now those of still thought and silent meditation. His soul, reclaimed to its proper uses, is now no longer a den of thieves; but, as God originally intended it, a house of prayer. The Lord whom he seeks suddenly comes to his temple, and fills it with a peace which passeth all understanding. Thus, when he would repose on God, or, like the beloved disciple, would lean on Jesus's bosom, he has not to "ascend to heaven (that is, to bring Christ down)," nor to "descend into the deep (that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead);" for "the word is nigh him, even in his mouth and in his heart." Thus, in a certain sense, "a man shall be" to himself "as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as

rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

XIX.

PRESENT SORROWS AND FUTURE JOYS CONTRASTED.

"THESE are they," says the elder (Rev. vii. 14, 16, 17), "which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Thus we are taught that that heaviness, which endureth for this present night, will enhance the "joy" that "cometh in the morning." And, as "one star differeth from another star in glory," so may we conceive that the kind, as well as the degree of happiness in the future state, will be materially affected by the specific character of our trials, and the peculiar complexion of our sufferings here below. Thus each bitter root will yield its answerable fruit of

righteousness ; and these afflictions prove but the shadows which coming blessings cast before them, or rather, in the emphatic words of scripture, the “ shadows of good things to come.”

There is a language which the darkest dispensations speak, and which these views alone can adequately decipher. It is a voice which tells of joys that are set before us, by their corresponding and contrasted sorrows here below ; which traces out to us, upon the map of our pilgrimage here, the course which we shall run rejoicing in a better world. Blessed are those mourners who know that the hand of Him, who alone can heal or comfort, shall be laid upon the very seat of pain—the very spot in which the pulse of anguish beats. Admitted to this secret, they will beguile many an hour of sorrow—nay, turn that sorrow into joy, by anticipations of the future ; by “ searching what, or what manner of ” pure felicity their present sufferings may indicate as the more especial portion of their inheritance. Thus, if banished, like the beloved disciple, to some unfrequented isle ; if doomed to tread a desert soil, where no brother’s voice could soothe his ear, no “ human face divine ” could cheer his sight, the child of God might lighten the darkness of his solitude, and fill the lonely void with visions of those scenes which the remembrance of his now forlorn estate

will one day render, by comparison, doubly bright. "I learn," he might say, "from this peculiar trial, what is preparing for me in the realms above. It will be mine to feel a transport, which nothing but this contrast could inspire, when the heavenly Jerusalem bursts upon my view; when angels welcome me to that city of the living God; when I mingle with the happy throng which crowd its shining streets; when I converse with the spirits of just men made perfect, and take sweet counsel with the saints of God; when, with that multitude which no man can number, I sing praises unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

In like manner, may the heir of immortality, when harassed by the cares and wearied with the bustle of the world, exposed to the full brunt of its assaults, to "the noise of its waves and the madness of its people," may he thus still the perturbations of his heart: "If this be the cross appointed me, my portion in this scene of trial, my share of those troubles to which 'man is born,' 'as the sparks fly upward;' if it be mine for a season to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation amongst the 'tents of Kedar,' it will be mine also to be refreshed hereafter 'with the abundance of peace.' After this storm, a blessed and an eternal calm will follow. Let those who now pine in

solitude lift up the eye of faith, and see the bright assembly of the saints in light, for the full fruition of whose converse this solitude is now preparing them. For me, perhaps, an humbler path is destined in that world where every vessel will be filled with all the blessedness it can hold. I have been taught to sigh for tranquil scenes, to ‘seek peace, and ensue it,’ to desire a portion in that better country, ‘where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.’ I ask not for archangels’ wings or seraphs’ fires. If I am safely sheltered in the fold above; if I am numbered with the ransomed sheep, and reckoned amongst the celestial flock; if the Lord is my shepherd, I shall want nothing. It will more than satisfy my utmost wishes, to repose upon the green pastures, and to sit beside the still waters; to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God; and to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth.”

Thus also may the mourner, who has lost the desire of his eyes—the wife of his youth—the child of his hope—the prop of his declining years—in the pangs of nature, and in the multitude of his sorrows, refresh his soul. He may draw consolation from the bitterness of his cup, and thus speak peace to his bleeding heart: “If this be my portion of the temptations which are common

to man, my crown of rejoicing will be answerable to my cross, a blessing correlative to my sorrow. What I now sow in tears, I shall reap in joy. This separation will not always last : this parting is not for ever. It is the dispensation of Him who, behind a 'frowning providence, hides a smiling face ;' of Him who delights in mercy, and consults only for the happiness of his people. This short-lived pang is but the prelude to a still more blissful union than I could, without this present sorrow, have enjoyed—an union enhanced by contrast and doubly valued from its loss. It is but the necessary preparation for a reaction and rebound of feeling and glow of rapture, alike in kind, though immeasurably surpassing the emotions of that father's breast, who said, 'It was meet that we should make merry and be glad ; for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found.'" These are offered but as specimens of that divine alchymy, which can turn the basest metal into gold, and transmute the sufferings of life into the sure promise of those blessings to which they seem most pointedly opposed.

These are no flattering pictures—no flights of a visionary fancy. They are founded upon the sure warrant of scripture, and upon the express declarations of Him who thus inculcates, and thus applies the principle which I have ventured to lay

down (Luke vi. 21—23)—“Blessed are ye that hunger now ; for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now ; for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy ; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven ; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”

XX.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST’S DAY.

GOD is in his general Providence pleased to act by means. Accordingly, we find that, in pre-ordaining that John the Baptist should bear a conspicuous part in the history of the world’s redemption, He provided that he should be brought into the world under circumstances favourable to the expansion of every high and holy principle. His parents “were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.” Thus was the best security taken for his early growth in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And if he,

as we are told Luke i. 15, was to be "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb," the same blessed Spirit had already made his father and mother temples of his presence. We find, verses 41—47, that both Elizabeth and Zachariah were "filled with the Holy Ghost." What responsibilities, then, do these correspondencies imply in the tender name of parent !

John, we are told v. 80, when a "child, grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel." From that period to the age of thirty, this bright light was eclipsed and hidden from the world; teaching us, in this instance, as in that of John's great Master, that we should be satisfied to lie by, and to be unnoticed, and unoccupied in any active agencies, if such should be the will of heaven. Nay, should we be cast, as some of God's children have been, on a bed of long-protracted sickness, and thrown as a burden on those whom we would fain desire to serve and to assist, we should be thankfully resigned thus to lie passive in the hands of God. Trained in this school of true humility, when the brilliant ministry of this saint commenced, he was wholly devoid of every thing like self-importance. "When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou," what was

his reply? Was it, as the mouth of Truth attested, that he was “a burning and a shining light?” that he was “more than a prophet?” that “amongst those born of women there had not arisen a greater than he?” No: we hear the language of one who, whatever his errand might be, was but the shadow of a shade in his own esteem. “He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” Such was the retiring and gentle character of him who, when duty called, could enter into the palace of a prince, and boldly rebuke his vices, and denounce his bosom sins and cherished idols as unlawful and accursed things. Such was John as a man.

As a teacher, let us notice one or two particulars in his doctrine. First, he came “preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” that is, “Prepare your minds, wean them from former habits, remove all obstacles and opposing principles; for religion cannot dwell in an impure heart. Christ and sin cannot reign together, neither will God make a den of thieves his house of prayer.” Secondly, however strict and self-denying his instructions, he did not interfere with the providential order of society. He did not counsel men to leave those states and conditions of life unto which it had pleased God

to call them. And, surely, if any teacher come from God had been thus commissioned, we might conceive that John would have been the man. His dispensation was one of peculiar austerity, awful strictness, and ascetic seclusion from the habits of the world. And yet, what is his language to publicans and soldiers? Is it, as some modern instructors would say, "Leave your professions; withdraw from your positions in society." No. It is, "Remain where you are; and let your religion blend with the daily exercise of your duties." It is to the publicans, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." It is to the soldiers, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Thirdly, he bare witness to that light which came into the world, to save and sanctify and bless it. "Looking upon Jesus as He walked, He saith, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. Look upon that object with an eye of faith, and your sins will be blotted out. Contemplate his meekness and his humility, the beauty of his holiness, the wonders of his patience, and the splendour of his innocence; and that sight, that exhibition, will become the power of God unto your salvation; and the sin that doth so easily beset you will fly from the presence of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

XXI.

ON THE RICH FOOL.—PART I.

“ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully ; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ?”—LUKE xii. 16, 17.

THE word which is here translated “ ground ” may signify also an extensive territory ; and, if we so render it, the person spoken of in this parable was a large land-proprietor, and one in a high station of life. But it is more natural to suppose, from the description given, that what we should call a thriving farmer is intended. And this is one of those many and affecting incidental proofs with which Scripture abounds, of our Lord’s, not only positive but, relative humiliation as man. To the incarnate God, the Prince of life and glory, in his human associations and habits of feeling, and when measured by himself and his own familiar friends, one whom the great would look down upon, was no unimportant personage. Compared with Him who had not where to lay his head, and with those who had left all the little that they had to follow Him, a wealthy cultivator of the ground was in an exalted and enviable position. How affecting, then, in this

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“ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully ; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ?”—LUKE xii. 16, 17.

THE word which is here translated “ ground ” may signify also an extensive territory ; and, if we so render it, the person spoken of in this parable was a large land-proprietor, and one in a high station of life. But it is more natural to suppose, from the description given, that what we should call a thriving farmer is intended. And this is one of those many and affecting incidental proofs with which Scripture abounds, of our Lord’s, not only positive but, relative humiliation as man. To the incarnate God, the Prince of life and glory, in his human associations and habits of feeling, and when measured by himself and his own familiar friends, one whom the great would look down upon, was no unimportant personage. Compared with Him who had not where to lay his head, and with those who had left all the little that they had to follow Him, a wealthy cultivator of the ground was in an exalted and enviable position. How affecting, then, in this

view, is his exhortation to his disciples, in the twenty-second verse! He had been warning them against covetousness: He had been showing them the folly of heaping up treasures that perish; and now, when He comes to make the application to his little flock or family upon earth, in what shape or mode were they assailable by the temptations against which He has guarded them? Could it have even entered into their imaginations to expect, in the present dispensation, any of the glittering prizes of the world—to have large possessions, to be gorgeously apparelled, or to live delicately, as those in kings' houses? No: their covetousness went no farther than the humble hope that they might have food to eat, and raiment to cover them from the cold: "He said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on."

In the first of these verses we have a picture, drawn to the life, of what the world esteems a happy man. That money is the great idol of mankind is a lesson which we learn from every day's experience of these busy scenes around us. It is true the children of this world have lords many, and gods many; but still to mammon is paid the chief homage of their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. Other idols have strong and power-

ful attractions ; but *their* altars are quickly deserted when their votaries are summoned into the courts of mammon. The softest blandishments of pleasure, the most stirring objects of ambition, yield at once to his superior claims. All crowd around the portals of his temple : “ the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces :” high and low, rich and poor, young and old, all are gathered together to the dedication of the image which the prince of the world hath set up ; all fall down and worship before his shrine. For money amongst the humbler classes, life is perilled, health is sacrificed, youth is blighted in the bud. In the higher orders, among the other proofs of this blind devotion, we see how young men, touched with the loadstone of this magic power, can in the article of marriage, master their feelings and conquer their instincts, and leave all by which nature can be most powerfully attracted ; nay, how, though filled with vanity, they can disregard rank and title, and brilliancy of station, and all flock around, and all become suitors to some favourite or rather victim of mammon, that they may lead a cheerless life, unloving, and unloved, thus immolating themselves upon the altar of the inexorable god.

Delusive though it be, yet, according to the estimate of the world, here is the picture of happiness at full length: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." To be in undisputed possession of that prize for which the rest of mankind are in so many instances vainly striving is, to the earthly mind, a "consummation devoutly to be wished." But let us draw near to this envied man: let us listen to what passes in the secret chambers of his mind, where all false pretences would be vain. "He thought within himself." He does not speak out: his own breath affrights him: in his distempered imagination the walls have ears: he dreads that some fellow-worshipper of mammon may overhear the secret of his wealth, and rob him of his treasure. Well, but what is it which he thus inwardly whispers to his own heart? Does he say, I am contented, I am at peace, I am happy? Does he silently lift up the tribute of his gratitude to heaven? No: it is not the voice of gratulation nor of joy. It is rather the language of perplexity, anxiety, and care. They are the very words of the unjust steward in his last extremity, "What shall I do?" And all these inward doubtings, and these "great thoughts of heart" were occasioned, be it observed, by the sudden influx of so much wealth. This man was not only

enviable as rich, but riches had with him all the freshness and excitement of what was unlooked for and unanticipated. He was doubly happy as the world would think: he had in his treasures things both new and old. The earthly mind becomes fatigued with sameness: the uniformity even of prosperity can cloy; and idols by constant familiarity lose their charm. But in the case before us this monotony was relieved: there was a current in the waters, a breeze upon life's surface; and covetousness was now feasted with something still more stimulating than its daily fare. So it was in appearance; but what is the secret here disclosed? We find this favoured mortal "thinking within himself," but not knowing on what to fix his thoughts—wanting counsel, but afraid to ask it—the object of pity, and not envy, if there were any indeed that knew the restlessness of his heart. We know that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows." Such is the recoil of covetousness upon itself: such are the wages of those who make mammon their God. But what was it which rendered this man at once prosperous without and indigent within? What was it which constituted this seeming crisis of his exaltation the real crisis of his wretchedness? It was no other than the

unexpected influx of new treasures: it was the glut of that for which all experience so keen an appetite: it was this that made the subject of the parable miserable through excess of happiness. His ground had brought forth plentifully beyond all his calculations: hence his carefulness: hence the anxieties which crowded upon his heart. "What shall I do," says he, "because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

XXII.

ON THE RICH FOOL.—PART 2.

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"—LUKE xii. 18—21.

AFTER anxious and painful thought, this child of fortune at last makes up his mind. He has first of all to demolish, what he, or his father before him, had spent, perhaps, many an anxious week, or month, or year, in building. "He said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns." What had been erected with so much cost and care,

must now come to pieces and be levelled with the ground. Fit emblem of every scene of earthly happiness, and of every structure framed beneath the stars ! However firm their foundations may appear, however closely our hearts may cleave to them, and “ our inward thoughts may be that they will continue for ever,” yet all are included in the sentence passed upon the temple at Jerusalem : “ The days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”

But the demolition of his former buildings was but the beginning of new labours : “ I will pull down my barns,” said he, “ and build greater.” All past perplexities and toils were now to be repeated, only upon a more extended scale, before this rich man could secure his property, or feel that it was his own. As to present enjoyment, the semblance or shadow of it does not seem to have entered into his mind : nothing yet had been reaped but apprehension, care, and trouble. Well, but the remote future was to compensate for all immediate losses. When the wearisome process has been gone through, “ I will then,” says this blinded mortal, “ sit down and rest, and breathe from all my toils ; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years : take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” Alas,

what gratulations are these to offer to an immortal soul ! What trifling with the wants and woes and miseries it feels, while, deprived of its own connatural food, it thirsts for the streams of living water, and hungers for the bread which came down from heaven ! If to a spiritual essence it seem like derision to say, in the sense here proposed, “ Eat and drink,” still more keenly must it, while enslaved to sin, feel the mockery which invites it to “ take its ease, and be merry.” Alas, “ there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” The soul was formed for God, and it cannot rest until it rest in Him. The immortal spirit in her captivity finds heaviness in the midst of all that mirth in which her earthly companion riots and rejoices. “ By the rivers of the mystical Babylon she sits down and weeps when she remembers Zion. They that waste her may require of her mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” But how can she be happy in uncongenial climes, or “ sing the Lord’s song in a strange land ?”

Such, nevertheless, was the delusion of the individual whose character is here drawn. His mind was filled with dreams of joys to come : his whole soul was divided between calculations and schemes of business, and anticipations of ease and honour, of an abundant harvest after all his toils

a rich reward for that self denial which had risen above the mere pleasures of the moment, and, with a long look out, “laid up his goods for many years.” With a mind thus occupied and absorbed, did he, as the passage leads us to suppose, lie upon his bed at night. The world, in full possession of his soul, the thoughts of eternity quite shut out, no ray of light entering through the crevices of those barriers of flesh and blood, erected to exclude the everlasting day—all secure, as if this earth were every thing, as if there were no heaven above, no hell beneath, no God that sees, or hears, or reads the language of the heart—when suddenly, without warning, without any thing to break the fall, the soul is hurried down the precipice of death. The floods of eternity rush in at once upon the vessel, and sink her to rise no more. Barns, and stores, and fruits, and goods, projects for the future and dreams of bliss to come, all are scattered by the breath of God, all flee before that voice which says, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” One thing at least was certain, that they and their present possessor must part for ever: “so is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

XXIII.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

“ And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain ; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier ; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”--LUKE vii. 11—15.

UPON what peculiar errand of love and mercy our Lord approached the city called Nain, Scripture does not inform us. But whatever this errand might have been, his mind was then, as it was always, ready for every call, and observant of all that occurred around him. And such will be uniformly the effect of true religion. Those much mistake its character who suppose that its tendency is so to fill the capacities of the soul with one absorbing interest, as to abstract it from the varying objects which move successively along the scenes of life. On the contrary, religion sets the heart at ease, and gives wing and liberty to the faculties of the mind ; and thus renders it

moveable in every direction, vigilant at every point, and observant of the most trivial occurrences. The pious man is in a state of moral health, and has an appetite for all that is not sinful in life; his spirit is diametrically opposed to that gloomy absence and mystical absorption in which he that is wrapped up and buried, is dead while he liveth.

When Jesus “came nigh to the gate of the city,” a funeral was presented to his view. Besides his own disciples “much people” followed Him; and also “much people” was in attendance upon the corpse. Thus two large assemblages were brought together; in the midst of which was the dead man, going to his lonely bed. And this reminds us that though multitudes may “throng us and press us” while we continue here, and though friends may crowd around us and accompany us to the shores of death, yet we must, each in our turn, embark, and make the voyage alone; we must enter by a solitary path into the unknown regions of eternity. The case which now claimed our Lord’s attention was of no ordinary interest. It was that bereavement of which the prophet speaks, as the sharpest arrow which can pierce the soul—“They shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son.” And this heaviest of afflictions was aggravated by every

circumstance which could render the loss bitter and overwhelming: "Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." She had no husband now to advise, to sympathize with, to support and pity her, or to take his share in bearing this load of sorrow. Husband, counsellor, protector, all that these names imply, had centred in her only son—her one remaining prop and staff; but this prop had failed—this staff was broken. Such was the brief but comprehensive history of woe the Saviour read with one rapid glance. Her sorrowing countenance would at once have revealed the secret to his all-penetrative eye, had He "to whom all hearts are open" needed that even that should testify. "When the Lord saw her He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." Let us not, however, understand our Lord as speaking here the language of rebuke. He could not have condemned a mother's tears, who himself paid the last tribute of friendship, and wept at the grave of Lazarus. He did not surely forbid to nature that kind relief. No: it was rather a language which bespoke a fellow-feeling with the apostle who thus addressed his sorrowing companions, "What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?" They were words which seemed to say that he had caught the infection of

the widow's sorrow, and besought her to spare his feelings, no less than to moderate the excesses of her own grief.

Sympathy, even from those who can give no more, is a balm to the wounded heart. But what a comfort it is to all that mourn to find this sympathy in the breast of one who can save no less than pity ! What a blessed and unfailing source of consolation under every trial, to see the union here presented between power and love, to behold Him whose compassions mingled with the widow's tears, clothed in the majesty and arrayed in the omnipotence of God, bursting the bands of death, opening the gate of the unseen world, remanding a spirit from its upward flight to re-enter and re-animate its tabernacle of flesh !

“ And he came and touched the bier ; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”

It is not so much in the grander exhibitions of his infinite perfections as in the lesser and minuter instances of his love, that we are best able to form a just estimate of the mind that was in Christ Jesus. It is not so much in the infinitude of his compassions as in the kindness, the considerateness, the amiable attention to the feelings of those

with whom He had to do in daily life, that we best appreciate the tenderness of that heart which once beat, nay, which now beats, within the spotless bosom of the Saviour. When we see Him not only raising the dead, but delivering this son to his mother, leading him up to her that she might enfold him in her arms, seeming to feel the luxury of turning sorrow into joy, and claiming it as his happy privilege to say, "Behold, thy son liveth;" when we witness this charming exhibition, shall not "our hearts burn within us" at the prospect of those still more delightful scenes which await the blessed in the life to come? If this gracious, this condescending Being preside over all the household of God, and if all power be lodged in these gentle hands, "how amiable must be the dwellings," how calm the mansions, how peaceful the abodes, which He has furnished and prepared for them that love Him! But even in his own paradise, "of all his gifts He is himself the crown." Let us then join with pious Bishop Hall in saying, "I see now, O blessed Jesus, I see where thou art; even far above all heavens, at the right hand of thy Father's glory. O do thou raise up my heart thither to thee; place thou my affections upon thee above, and teach me therefore to love heaven, because thou art there."

XXIV.

BARTIMEUS.

“As he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway side, begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort : rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way : thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”—MARK X. 46—52.

THIS poor man is a lively emblem of every child of Adam in his natural state. He was blind : and so is every one that is born of woman—blind to spiritual things, till the light of the gospel day dawn and arise in his heart.

Nor do the children of this world resemble Bartimeus in his blindness more than in his occupation: he “sat by the highway side, begging.” That powerful instinct, which the body feels for food, can but faintly represent the intense desires and appetites of the soul. No created thing can fill this craving void, or answer this universal call of spiritual nature; and, consequently, the soul

which has not found out God, is poor indeed. Separated from its Author and its end, cast upon this barren world, it finds a mighty famine in the land. It has wandered from the true fold, the true pasture, and the true Shepherd. It wishes to be happy; but it is blind, and has lost the way to happiness. It is hungry and thirsty; but it asks only of those who give it for bread a stone, or lead it to those broken cisterns which hold no water. The truth is, that without religion the person who has the least feeling is the best off. But the man of sensibility, who wants this living water, and this celestial food, feels a poverty far deeper than that of Bartimeus—a destitution which exceeds all temporal want as much as the never-ending soul measures out and outweighs the earthly clod which it inhabits.

But the son of Timeus was not always left to seek a pittance from ordinary passengers. Relief was now near at hand. The good Samaritan journeyed where he was. “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Can any of you call to your recollection moments when, sitting in solitary places, you have felt with more than usual impression the utter emptiness of the world—have felt yourselves deceived by its promises, wounded by its neglect,

sick of its disappointments, dissatisfied and weighed down by the burden of life? And have you, at such moments, ever seemed to yourselves, as it were, to catch a transient glimpse of happiness, such as this world cannot afford? Has even a fleeting vision of those deep consolations, that peaceful calm which the believing soul enjoys, seemed to illumine the darkness of your mind? Such thoughts, believe me, do not come by chance: they descend from God. It is the Spirit of Christ which visits you at these bright moments. It is Jesus of Nazareth that "passeth by." You resemble Bartimeus in the opportunity. Seize it with the promptitude that he did: imitate and adopt his prayer, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

Now, if you offer up this prayer, not as a mere lip service, but in spirit and in truth; if in real sincerity and full penitence of heart, feeling that you are lost and guilty sinners, and that there is none other name under heaven whereby you can be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; if in this frame of mind you pray, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me"—these prayers will pierce the heavens. But depend upon it that, in some shape or another, if you are thus really in earnest, and resolved without compromise to lay hold upon salvation, that in some

shape or other you will meet with opposition. Many will charge you, as they did Bartimeus, "that you should hold your peace." Your own hearts will raise up clouds of unbelief. They will whisper that these anxieties are quite unnecessary; these notions never can be realized. The maxims of the worldly-wise and prudent will muster in array against you: "This is going into extremes; you can be religious enough without so much. To what length is this to go? Where is it to end?" Nay, when a man rises above a religion of form, and struggles for the prize of endless life, his greatest opposition will sometimes proceed from those who are nearest and dearest to him in the flesh.

But, though many thought it presumptuous in this humble person to interrupt our Lord in what they considered as more important business, yet Jesus himself judged not so. He laid, as it were, all other claims aside. "He stood still and commanded him to be called; and they called the blind man," we are told, "saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." Thus does our blessed Lord, in a much higher sense, call every one who hears a Saviour's name: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." These are the

general invitations of the Gospel; but there is a more special application of this call, when the Lord sends it by his Spirit to the heart. Man's necessity is God's opportunity; and often does God choose our heaviest hours and darkest days as the time of our visitation. When clouds overhang our path, when our hopes are withered, and our hearts are bleeding under some affliction; at these softened seasons the Lord Jesus secretly touches the springs of conscience, and manifests himself to the soul. At such a moment, convictions unknown before flash upon the mind. The sinner sees with new eyes, and looks back with astonishment upon the madness of his former course. He had left a blooming paradise, that he might sweat and toil and reap nothing. He had committed two evils, as the prophet speaks: he had left the fountains of living water, and hewed out broken cisterns, that can hold no water. He had deserted the liberty of God's children, that he might live in thankless drudgery to the world. He had betrayed his Saviour, and trampled on his blood. And what had he done this for? He had done it to gain what in his conscience he believes worth nothing—to gain emptiness, vanity, misery: he had done it, not in fact that he might gain at all, but that he might lose everything—that he might throw away all he had: that he might lay his

honour in the dust ; that he might live in the most abject fear of the most contemptible of his fellow-creatures ; that with desperate infatuation he might devote to a world which he inwardly despised, his liberty, his happiness, his soul, and reap, as the sure reward of all his labour, the damnation of hell. These convictions, sometimes fix their arrows in the sinner's heart ; while Jesus at the same time rises upon the soul, and with the same look that He once cast on Peter, seems to say, " Is it for this that you have left the ways of pleasantness and paths of peace ? have given up the sunshine of the breast, the serenity of a clear conscience, those hopes which feed on immortality, heaven in its early dawning here, and the enjoyment of God throughout the ages of eternity ? " When thoughts like these come home with power to the mind, a man is then really disposed to be in earnest. Religion is no trifling matter with him now ; let him then turn, (if he want advice from man,) not to the lukewarm counsels of fleshly wisdom, but to those who are serious in religion—to the men who seem to keep eternity and a judgment to come practically in view, whose conversation shows that their hearts are not in captivity to the world, who live, not by sight, but by faith upon the Son of God ; and these will know and spiritually discern the symptoms of his case. They

will perceive that it is God's work ; they will cheer that favoured soul, and apply, in season, the very words with which "they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise ; he calleth thee."

When Bartimeus heard these blessed accents, "casting away his garments, he rose and came to Jesus." In like manner do you lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset you. Whatever your darling passion, whatever your bosom idol—if it be a right hand, cut it off ; if a right eye, pluck it out, and cast it from you. Throw off this covering of defilement ; and, while you do so with full purpose and sincerity of heart, yet place no reliance on your own sacrifices or doings. Disclaim every thought and every plea of merit ; cast off your own righteousness as filthy rags ; and then come to Christ, in simple dependence on him alone, naked, poor, and blind.

The soul which thus comes to Christ, He never did and never will cast out. Hear what comfortable words He speaks to Bartimeus : "Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ?" Such is his gracious reception of every sinner that truly turns to Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Here is your encouragement ; avail your-

selves of it, and say, like one who wishes to be heard, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." This is not, I grant, precisely the petition of one already spiritually awakened, for he has received his sight; but I am sure that this is the prayer which ought to be offered up by the far greater part of those who call themselves Christians.

Whatever men may formally profess in creeds, yet while they live to the things of the world, while they are really more afraid of man than of God, while, in spite of general admissions, they are practically more alive to the risk of earthly treasures than to the imminent danger of their souls, I do say that men in this frame (and such are the great mass of mankind) are blind to the things of God; that the eyes of their spiritual understanding are not opened; that, though they may have heard of eternity, heaven, and hell, with the hearing of the ear, yet to the right way of knowing and apprehending these things, they are dead as the earth they stand on. They want the very principle by which these things are known: they want that faith which is not natural to us, but which is the gift of God: they want that spiritual eye of the awakened soul, to which the great objects of eternity are revealed in their real nature, in the vivid characters of actual truth, in their inconceivable, immeasurable importance. That these

things are infinitely momentous, our reason tells us ; why, then, are they not felt to be so ? Why do they not influence the life ? Simply because men have not awakened senses to believe them. Suppose that at this moment the skies were parted, that the glory of God was at once to burst upon the world, and the sign of the Son of man to beam forth from amidst the clouds of heaven, what would then become of all the common reasonings about conformity to the world, about the wretched vanities and paltry objects of ambition, about the pleasures so triumphantly called innocent ? Alas, all this refuge of lies would fly like clouds before the wind, or like night before the morning. And why ? Because we should then see before our eyes the things which we all profess to believe, are actually coming on the earth.

Faith, then, does in time what the righteous revelation of God must do, when it is for us, perhaps, too late. It brings things spiritual and eternal home to us with the power of real life : it convinces the understanding, and, by convincing the understanding, changes the heart and converts the soul. “ Jesus said unto Bartimeus, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.” Such is the natural consequence, the invariable result of that faith which imparts spiritual vision to the mind, and heals the distem-

pers of the soul. No sooner do we believe, than we run the way of God's commandments, and follow in those footsteps which Christ has trod before us. And here I cannot omit the notice of an opinion current in the world, and to which you, doubtless, are not strangers : it is this—that those persons who look to Christ as the alone meritorious cause of their salvation, and who place religion in the heart rather than in outward forms and ceremonies, that they decry that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. And it is not a little remarkable, that this charge is often brought by those who are themselves leading an easy careless life, against the very persons who are striving, however imperfectly, to fill up faithfully the whole circle of their duties, to feed the hungry and cover the naked with a garment, to instruct the ignorant and convert the sinner from his way, to do good, in a word, to the souls and bodies of men.

If we are really in earnest in the high concerns of eternity, by this rule we shall constantly and faithfully try and examine ourselves. The same faith which justifies before God, sanctifies the soul : and, if we would live in the bright regions of the blessed hereafter, the great question is, are we living to God now? Are we growing in grace and gaining ground in those holy, happy, and heavenly tempers which are fitted for the life

to come, which will strike root in that happy soil, and flourish in the paradise of God? As the head of that mystical body into which faith engrafts us, was not of this world, are we no longer of this world? Have we come out of it in heart and mind, and become separate? Are our conversation, our treasure, and our affections in heaven? Does our will approve, and does our spirit rejoice in, the assurance that the pure in heart shall see God? And, having this hope, do we endeavour to purify ourselves, even as Christ was pure? Do we love our neighbour as ourselves? Are we grieved for his distresses, anxious for his temporal welfare, still more anxious for his eternal happiness? Are we, in a word, lovers of God? Can we lift up our eyes to the Searcher of hearts, and say—"Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee?" These graces may exist where they are in much weakness, and always need, in their highest attainable perfection, the blood of sprinkling. Nevertheless these alone are the solid evidences of faith; and, if we would know that we are in the light, we must walk as children of the light; if we would know that our eyes are opened, that we have really "received our sight," we must, like Bartimeus, "follow Jesus in the way."

XXV.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS.

“For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”—
JEREMIAH ii. 13.

THERE is not one of the sacred penmen who represents the character of Almighty God in more amiable or affecting colours than the prophet Jeremiah. In this very chapter we find the most touching instances of his tenderness (ver. 2, 3:) “Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying Thus saith the Lord: I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in the land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase.” Here we find Jehovah in the character of an injured husband, whose ill-requited love looks back upon times when some slight returns of his constant affection had been made. These returns, momentary as they were, and disproportionate to his claims, he nevertheless contrasts with present unkindness; and, with fond partiality, magnifies far beyond the reality of the case. For at what period of their history could the Israelites

be thus addressed, were it not that in the bosom of God there resides the fountain of that charity which “believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things?” Had not the voice of infallible truth assured us, could the heart of man have conceived that the supreme God would thus humble himself to his creatures, would thus expostulate and complain (v. 15)—“What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?” In a like strain he proceeds, and in the tenth and eleventh verses challenges the whole earth to produce an instance of such wanton fickleness, such base ingratitude, as that with which he has been treated: “Pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit?”—Go to the countries of the Mediterranean on the east, intellectual, refined, and cultivated as they are; and thence turn in the opposite direction to the rude inhabitants of Kedar in Arabia, to the west: traverse the whole compass of the globe, examine the state of superstition in every form, survey the endless varieties of idolatry; see it embellished on the one hand by every decoration of taste

and fascination of the arts, or on the other hand sunk to the lowest level of brutish ignorance and grovelling sensuality; and then pronounce whether any nation under heaven has treated their gods with the same ingratitude and indignity that the living and true God has received at the hands of his own peculiar people.

Such is the wondrous exhibition which an apostate world presented in the prophet's day; and is it not at present substantially the same? Does not religion, in proportion as it is "earthly, sensual, devilish," bind the great human mass in its iron chains, open their purses and their hearts, and inspire them with zeal and loyalty, even unto the death? And is not the gospel of peace and purity and forgiveness despised, and trifled with, and neglected by those who are nevertheless the professed disciples of a crucified Redeemer? Do not Jews and Mahometans and heathens make a parade of their religion, and triumph in the name of their gods; while those who, in their creeds, confess the faith once delivered to the saints, alone are ashamed of the God they worship; so that to allude to his existence, to pronounce his name, or to speak of his tender mercies in their public assemblies, or in their familiar intercourse, would be only to outrage and do violence to their own feelings? Well might an ill-requited Benefactor ex-

claim, (v. 12,) “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate.” If this appeal be made, as is frequent in scripture, to the material heavens, we know that to such a call they can emphatically respond. We know that, when the very principle of which we speak was, by concurrent causes, fully developed and brought out, and when the express image of God’s person was nailed as a malefactor to the cross, the sun withheld his light from that deed of shame, and that “there was darkness over all the earth.” But if this pathetic complaint be made, not to the inanimate creation, but to the inhabitants of the stars of light, what child of frail flesh and blood can conceive the mingled wonder and indignation with which those pure, unfallen, and high intelligences would hear that voice, not calling new systems into being, not commanding the willing services of all the hosts of heaven, but turned as it were to strains of lamentation (v. 13 :) “My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water?”

Nor is this the only instance in which the “high and lofty One” speaks in the accents of a father’s tenderness, and as if sensible of a father’s wrongs. In the prophet Isaiah the same af-

fecting appeal is made: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.'" "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard: what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

But the Divine bosom is not filled with human passions: no infirmities, no resentments can dwell therein. God is high above all possibilities of loss or injury. He can suffer no diminution or obscuration of his glory from the unfaithfulness of his creatures. He pities their wanderings, and would bring back his erring children. "He commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The language of his heart is in every period of the world the same: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will

not return to destroy Ephraim ; for I am God and not man." "He that planteth the ear, shall He not hear ? He that formed the eye, shall He not see ?" And he that made the heart of man, and made it for himself, shall He not know how against the unchangeable constitution of things it is for that heart to find repose until it rest in Him ? All its vast desires of unalloyed enjoyment, all its aspirations after glory, all its hungerings and thirstings for boundless bliss and blessedness, all are but the instinctive turning of the soul to him, the cries of the celestial offspring to their Almighty Parent, the tendencies of the spiritual nature to the sovereign good. It is because God knows what is in man that he laments his folly, and mourns for his loss in forsaking Him, the fountain of living waters.

But there is another evil which deluded mortals have committed : "They have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." They have toiled and laboured "for that which satisfieth not." But even here the wicked pay a blind unconscious homage unto God ; for all their ceaseless search after happiness is but the murmuring of the stream while striving to regain the parent ocean. Every shadow of bliss which mocks the appetites of the soul attests that there is a substance which alone can satisfy them.

Having left the fountain of living waters, various are the cisterns, the broken cisterns, which men, with infinite labour, form out of the materials of this dry and barren world. Some seek their happiness in riches; but can riches set this busy anxious heart at rest? Can they allay its fears, and say to its perturbations, "Peace, be still?" Can they "minister to a mind diseased, or pluck from memory a rooted sorrow?" Or can riches bind the members of a family together in bonds of sweet affection? Can they make men of one heart, and of one soul, and thus render the scene in which they dwell what it ought to be—a miniature of heaven? Can they shed abroad in any breast that principle of mutual love, without which riches are nothing worth? Nay, they are often but splendid misery, and amply verify the wise man's saying—"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Others seek for happiness in the high things of life, in station, and in those objects which ambition courts. But here, again, they, who go after another than the true God, have great trouble. Truly it may be said that pride was not made for man; for the proud are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest. There is in vanity, when glutted to the full, in ambition, when applause and adulation have fanned it thoroughly into

flame—there is at such moments in the soul a felt sense of emptiness, an inward misgiving, a secret suspicion that all is false and hollow, which those best know whom an infatuated world would call the happiest of mankind. If then the *gratification* of pride be this restless inflation of the mind, what are its *mortifications* and *disappointments*? What does the proud man feel when some rival has surpassed him, some great one has disowned him; when he can catch no smile from his superiors, when the world is beginning to neglect him, and to throw him aside like a broken vessel? There is a kind of judicial infatuation by which pride refuses its own natural supplies, and courts the very lashes under which it writhes. One might imagine, *a priori*, that the vain man, who sighs for admiration, would seek the society of his inferiors, and haunt those circles in which he would see obsequiousness in every countenance, and adulation in every eye. But in point of fact it is not so. Pride rushes on its own ruin, and drives its votaries, as by a kind of instinct, to run after superiors, who overlook them, and despise them; and thus to be the tail rather than the head of every company into which they voluntarily go.

Others, lastly, seek their happiness in friends. Here indeed are cisterns which can hold some

water, some even living water ; for in the image of God was man made. It is, however, but a drop which the creature can hold ; from the dearest object upon earth can flow only but a shallow rill, and that rill will soon leave its earthly channels, and mingle with the pure streams of paradise, and join “ the fountain of living waters ” in the realms above. Nevertheless the ties that bind kindred hearts here below will not long be severed ; they will soon be reunited in happier scenes. But that they may be so, let us take care that our friendships and attachments begin, continue, and end in God. Let us keep ourselves from idols ; let us give unto God the things that are God’s ; and then, of all the real blessings which he has given us here, we shall lose none, for he will raise them up again at the last day.

XXVI.

OUR TEMPTATIONS COMMON TO MAN.

“ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”—1 Cor. x. 13.

It is not the least of the various temptations to which we are subject, to think those temptations

peculiar, and such as none but ourselves are exposed to. Of every form of sorrow which we see around us, we are disposed to say, "It is not like my sorrow. Such an one has, I grant, sustained a loss, and undergone a trial, but that I could have borne. There is something in my case which distinguishes it from the common lot. None can understand my complaint, or sympathize with my grief; and thus I am alone, a solitary wanderer amidst the ruins of the past. In vain I look for some to pity me; for no one can enter into the secret of my sorrow; it is confined to my own breast. Imagination draws a picture there of joys departed, and happy days now fled, which no eye contemplates but my own. For me, therefore, there is no balm in Gilead, no physician there. For who can prescribe for a distemper which he does not understand? Who can administer a soothing remedy when he knows not the seat of pain, or how to find the wound that festers in the heart?"

Another temptation which aggravates our ordinary trials is a proneness to think that, if we fall into misfortunes and are forsaken by the world, all this is a sign that God is displeased, and has forgotten to be gracious. This visible and tangible system sometimes shuts out so effectually from our view the eternity that surrounds us, that

we feel as if God had nothing but temporal benefits to bestow—nothing in reserve beyond what our senses can apprehend. And thus, when deprived of earthly comforts, we feel abandoned and forlorn. We feel as though God had no concern in us, and had given us up : so that now indeed our enemies may say, “God hath forsaken him ; persecute him, and take him, for there is none to deliver him.”

In all such misgivings, it is a great relief and an unspeakable consolation to apprehend the full force of the assurance, that our temptation is such as is common to man ; that what we experience, multitudes around us, with some merely circumstantial variety, experience also ; that, if we have lost the desire of our eyes, others have lost their idols too ; that we are not, like the stricken deer, deserted by the whole flock, but that we are taking our share of the common burden, and learning in the same school with others, that “man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.” What volumes of consolation does that declaration speak, “God is faithful !” We know that God “of very faithfulness hath caused us to be afflicted.” He is faithful to his promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us, and that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

He is moreover, as St. Peter tells us, “a faithful *Creator*.” He who formed us with hearts that feel with such inexpressible tenderness—who endowed us with capacities which none but the Sovereign Good can fill, and with aspirations which nothing but infinite bliss can satisfy—he has not constructed this fine mechanism in vain; he has not formed us with these desires that he may mock them, or with these appetites that he may give us for bread a stone, and for a fish a serpent. “It is he that hath made us,” says the psalmist, “and not we ourselves: we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.” He will then not “suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” He who designs and plans the affliction for our good will secure that, however it may appear to “keep us in on every side,” a door of deliverance shall be open. Are we then “any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body or estate;” let us be assured that, though we cannot see it, the way of escape has not been forgotten. Our rescue may be effected in the manner least expected by us. It may be by some change in the hearts of others. It may be by some alteration in our outward circumstances. It may be by new strength and grace imparted to our

souls. It may be effected by that voice which stills every wave and hushes every storm, when it speaks in the inward chambers of the soul, and says, "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

XXVII.

ON GOD'S JEALOUSY.

NOTHING can give a more lively or affecting notion of that love which God condescends to feel towards miserable and undeserving sinners, than that he should ascribe to himself the character of "a jealous God;" for the susceptibility of that passion towards any object is always in proportion to the strength and ardour of our attachment. It is true that, in attributing any such emotions to the divine mind, the scripture speaks a language accommodated to our weakness, and which should not be too strictly or literally interpreted. Nevertheless, no such qualification can be required where affections sympathetic with our own, are displayed in the person of the incarnate God. What a world then of tenderness, of wounded love, and, in its most amiable exercise, of jealousy, is comprehended in that sketch which St. Luke has drawn with so masterly a hand—"And the Lord

turned, and looked upon Peter !” A person, not long since, related to me a dream which, simple as it was, produced a lasting effect upon his mind and conduct. The substance of the dream was merely that he saw his Saviour in his human form ; but no words, he said, could describe his eye, and the look it seemed to cast on him. It was not (open and wilful sinner as he had been) a look of anger, of scorn, of threatening, nor even of pity. There was a tender jealousy in that eye, there was a meaning in that glance, which pierced his heart ; it seemed to say, “ Have I deserved this of you ? Is this the requital which I meet with after all my sufferings, and for all the tokens of my love ? ” Such was the potency of that magic look that the person in question rose, as he assured me, with a fixed resolution, and with power to keep that resolution, to flee from vices which had been to him resistless before.

If love, as it is often said, begets love, love also demands love. It demands a reciprocity of affection, ardent and vigilant as itself ; it is ever accompanied with jealousy, and

“ Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of holy writ,”

of the absence or presence, of that return and payment which it demands.

It is not, in mere human intercourse, by great sacrifices or great favours that we manifest a strong attachment. A dim and purblind vision can discern the broader features of the landscape ; but a clear and vigorous sight alone can catch the minuter lineaments of the scene. In like manner, a faint affection is competent to do great things at the call of duty ; while deep affection is marked by an anxiety to please in every trifle, to watch the language of the eye, and to meet the wish just dawning in the mind. Thus it is with those whose affections are supremely set on God. It need not be said, that in their case the greater matters of obedience will be punctually attended to. But it is in the passing moments of each day—in little instances of patience, of self-government, of contentment, and of gratitude to heaven ; it is in those nicer touches of resemblance to Christ's peculiar character that our true discipleship in his school is known, or, in other words, that we best evince our love to God.

The same analogy points out the vanity of those excuses which some careless ones would plead : "I may," say they, "be deficient and transgress in many an instance, but I do not mean to offend God." There is nothing, we should observe, which so deeply wounds a friend as to slight and neglect him, and then to urge as our apology that

we had no such intention. If the offence were meant, it might proceed from some fancied injury, or some jealousy on our part, and the wound might again be healed, and friendship be restored; but to be capable of a careless failure in kindness and attention, can proceed from no cause but indifference to the object. And so it is with God: no affront to his Majesty is so great as that which betokens that he is out of our calculation, and absent from our habitual thoughts. Such slighting conduct proves that, though on formal occasions we may acknowledge him, yet, in our free, unfettered, and familiar moments, we have no sense of his existence, no recognition of his presence; and thus we can freely do the things which are most hateful in his sight and wounding to his love, with no other apology or defence than that we forgot that he was there.

Let me briefly conclude with saying, that those who love God feel the consciousness of his most vigilant inspection to be, not a burden and an uncomfortable restraint, but the very sun which gilds all the scenery of life: it renders each moment of importance, and makes us feel that every thing we do is worth being well done, because we live, if I may so speak, continually at court, and at the palace of the great King. And, though it is his presence above that alone can constitute the

fulness of joy, yet even in his felt presence here below, "there springs up a light for the righteous, and joyful gladness for them that are true-hearted."

XXVIII.

ON CHRIST'S CONDESCENSION IN WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET.

"Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" John xiii. 6.

LET us for a moment turn aside, and see the marvellous sight which this Scripture offers to our view. "And supper being ended (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,) Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself: after that, He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

It would appear that as an infinite atonement alone could be available for the pardon of our sins, so nothing but the exhibition of an infinite humiliation could shame down the pride and arrogance of the human heart. With every thing short of omnipotence, pride could grapple. All the lessons which the world could teach of disappointed ambition and mortified vanity; all the instances it can daily exhibit of “the lofty look of man” “humbled in the dust,” “and the haughtiness of men bowed down even to the ground,”—against these pride can still stand out, and refuse, like Pharoah, to “humble itself before the Lord.” Some exceptions are still made for our own particular case; some refuge of lies is found; some self-deception, by which the mind may fancy that for *it* to stoop, in such and such instances, would be to descend lower than any of equal claims and pretensions had ever gone down before it. But all such palliations of pride fly before the exhibition of an humbled God. The infinitude of the transition from the Majesty on high, to the manger, to the cross, and to the shame; this overwhelming object puts all measuring of ourselves with others, all reasonings as to the degrees to which we should or should not be humbled, out of the possibility of question. It lays the axe to the root of the tree. It teaches

us that the believer in Jesus should not merely moderate or regulate his pride, but tear its last lurking fibre from his soul; should bring his proud heart to the foot of the cross, that that cross may be the death of death to him—crucifixion to the old man—resurrection to the new man, recast in the mould of the humility of Jesus.

In the wondrous transaction to which this text refers, there is no part perhaps so touching as the emphatic words of Peter, (ver. 6,) “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?”

In the estimate of the Psalmist it was a condescension to which nothing could compare, for God even to notice the most exalted of his creatures. “Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath his dwelling so high: and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth.” (Psalm cxiii. 5.) Solomon in all his glory had scarce power to compass or sustain the thought that God should visit the magnificent temple which He had constructed to his honour. “But will God dwell indeed on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” (1 Kings viii. 27.) The prophet, when God was revealed to him in vision, could not support himself under that weight of glory. “Then

said I, Woe is me, for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah vi. 5.) He that was more than a prophet, thus accosts that Saviour, as feeling himself unworthy of his near approach. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matt. iii. 14.) Nay, the pure angels of heaven are described as veiling their faces before that presence to which they "continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy." How well then might we summon the entire compass of the intellectual creation to attend ; how well might we with the prophet say, "Hear, O heavens ; and give ear, O earth ; draw near and hearken to these words." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" the language of Simon the son of Jonas, the poor fisherman of Galilee, to the mighty God, the only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" All comment upon these marvellous words would but weaken their effect upon the heart that feels, upon the soul which believes, that Jesus is the Son of God.

But still there are lights and shades in this affecting picture : there are heights and depths in this overwhelming exhibition of gracious condescension, this coming down from above the heaven of heavens to a level to which the meanest of us

would think it disparagement to stoop : there are extremes so vast, so boundless, in this case, as to make us feel that though we see enough to fill us with wonder, love, and praise, there lie beyond and beneath all this, mines which we cannot explore. "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter." (ver. 7.)

XXIX.

TYPICAL NATURE OF THE FOREGOING.

"What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter." (John xiii. 7.)

THIS promise to Peter had an immediate fulfilment ; for our Lord proceeds at once to shew him what he had not at first apprehended, namely, that this action had a moral signification, and contained a moral lesson. "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; ye ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (ver. 14, 15.)

This washing, Peter was now informed, was of a typical and symbolical nature, and represented

that spiritual cleansing of the soul by the application of a Saviour's blood, without which there could be no remission, no entrance within the pale of his salvation. "Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." (ver. 8.) But besides this, our Lord had, no doubt, in view, the clearer manifestations of his divine attributes, which would, even in this life, display to this apostle's mind his glorious majesty, in still increasing contrast with the depths of abasement to which his condescension stooped. Nevertheless, till the light of eternity should reveal to him what no mortal eye can see, namely, God as He is displayed to saints above, who see Him as He is;—till then he could not reach the full measure of that knowledge, which celestial minds can compass, of the wonders of that great humility, by which the infinite majesty of God took upon Him the office of washing the feet of those who were, by their own confession, "made as the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things."

But these words have a more general application than to the parties more immediately concerned. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter,"—speaks with an emphatic force, unheeded as it may be by those who are insensible to the concerns of their salvation. It holds out to them an awful warning of the as-

tonishment and dismay with which they will one day see, if they will continue to disregard them now, the opportunities they have neglected, the advantages they have despised, the treasures they have trampled under foot, the vast machinery which was employed for their salvation, but all alas ! in vain. They will see how earth and heaven were in travail to bring them forth to God ; how the whole Godhead, the blessed and adorable Trinity, put forth the energies and agencies of their wisdom, power, and goodness ; how the Son of God waded through sorrow, and humbled himself in the dust ; how all this vast expenditure was lavished ; how the treasury of heaven put forth all its stores, and how, nevertheless, all was rejected, scorned, and scattered to the winds. Little do such careless ones comprehend the true force of those pregnant words as applied to them, "What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."

But these words, even to the saints of God, address themselves with emphatic meaning. For they see now but through a glass darkly. They adore with grateful hearts, indeed, that wondrous love which brought their Saviour to the shame and ignominy of the cross. They hear of this by the hearing of the ear, but their eye doth not see, as it will see hereafter, the immeasurable height,

the effulgence of that glory, from which the Son of God descended, that He might seek after them, and bring them up out of the wilderness of this world. When they behold Him in all the fulness of his Father's glory, and all the holy angels with Him; while thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him, then they will call to mind what He once became, what He stooped to, what He bore and what He endured, for them. They will then see with new eyes, comprehend with new senses, and measure with new capacities, the extremes which met, the contrarieties that centred, in Incarnate Deity, in Emmanuel, God with us. Then it will be theirs to cast their crowns before the throne and say, "Lord, is this reality? Is this waking certainty? Can we believe the report, and trust the information of these senses? Is this the glory of which thou didst empty thyself? Is this the heaven of heavens thou didst leave? Is this the bliss, are these the joys which thou didst abandon, that thou mightest wander, as an outcast and a child of sorrow, in that vale of tears and misery below?" If they cannot indeed use the literal words of Peter, and exclaim, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? they can say more; they can say, but with rapturous and high emotions which celestial bosoms alone can know, "Lord, art not

thou He who became poor, that I might reap these exhaustless riches? Didst thou become a child of sorrow, that I might inherit this boundless joy? Didst thou bear my sins and carry my infirmities? Didst thou take upon thy innocent soul all my foul impurities, my transgressions, and my sins? Didst thou for my sake give thy back to the smiters, and thy cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hide not thy face from shame and spitting?" Yes: these are the thoughts which will fire the souls, the recollections which will burn within the breasts of those whom a Saviour died to ransom and to win. This is the new song which they will cease not day and night to sing, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

XXX.

INFINITE DEPTH OF SCRIPTURE.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (St. John iii. 6.)

It is one of the characteristic distinctions of the Scripture, that it will bear a microscopic examination, under which any merely human composition would lose its interest and its charm. The subject matter of the word of God is of such immeasurable importance, it so blends with eternal objects, and spreads into infinitude, that, unlike those writings which treat of earth, the more intensely we gaze upon it, and restrain our thoughts from wandering, the more we shall find depths of meaning unperceived before. The mind will undergo a process like that of the mariner, who sees at first a speck of distant land, but, as he approaches nearer, is hailed and cheered by new discoveries. The mountains now appear, and now the hills rejoice on every side ; and by degrees the land opens out her bosom to his view ; and the green earth and varied landscape, fields of waving corn, trees, and spires in the midst of them that point to hea-

ven; his native village perhaps, the home from which wide seas so long had parted him,—all stand revealed before him, like a delicious dream, or as if the waves were wafting him to the shores of Paradise. Thus it is that the more closely we come in contact with any given point of Scripture, the more we shall apprehend its fulness; the more we shall be persuaded that beneath the depth which we now can find, there lie exhaustless treasures still to be explored.

We are in the habit of hearing and repeating well-known passages of Scripture. We admit their importance, but too often does their mere sound strike upon our ears, without our adverting to the things of which the words are signs. We repeat, for instance, “God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son.” These words may not be wholly disregarded; there may be a vague impression of pious feeling while we hear them; but let us pause, and reflect upon the terms of which this wonderful proposition is composed. Let us meditate upon each in the stillness of our souls. “God!” Here is the first term. But, says the book of Job, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is

longer than the earth and broader than the sea.” Here reason wholly fails. We might far better attempt to span the material heaven than fully to define what God is, or to comprehend his boundless essence. How then shall we derive instruction from a proposition, the first and leading term of which we have not intellectual faculties to comprehend? Here the heart must perform its office. The heart can embrace what the reason is incompetent to define. The heart, to the question “What is God?” can answer, “God is love.” This is the process by which we take refuge, as it were, from the overwhelming attributes of his immensity in the bosom of his condescension. And the more utterly are our intellectual faculties unequal to the task of reaching God in the firmament of his power, or in the spread of his infinitude, the more does the sense of his immeasurable greatness enhance the wonders of his love.

“God so loved.” But what does this second term imply? If God be love, then for God to love is for Him, as it were, to put his inmost self into action, to let loose the fountain of his nature, to pour forth the treasures of his heart. In what direction then does this tide of the divine compassion and boundless affection flow? What is the *object* which thus engages and draws out the

heart of God? “God so loved the *world*.” Such is the omnipotence of that love that it can force a passage through the densest medium of contrariety and repulsion. A world lying in wickedness, arrayed against the authority, alien from the life, and in essential opposition to the will, the nature, the holiness of God—this is the object, not of his aversion, but of his interest, his favourable regard, his love. Love, however, is a matter of degree. Some love little, and others much. But how did God love? Let us upon this point summon, as it were, heaven and earth to hear. Let us put to them the affecting inquiry of God himself, “What could have been done more for this vineyard that he hath not done in it?” Let us call on the whole circle of intelligent creation to tax their understandings to the utmost, and give the fullest reins to their imaginative powers, and to say, whether it could enter into the heart to conceive a greater instance, a more convincing demonstration of love, in all the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of its mighty energy, and illimitable expansion, than He has manifested to an ungrateful and degraded race. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

XXXI.

INFINITE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE MIND
OF CHRIST.

“ Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”—St. John xiii. 1.

IN our last reading we considered the infinite depth of Scripture. Let us now meditate upon the infinite comprehensiveness of the mind of Christ. Let us, in the same deliberate spirit, and in the stillness of fixed attention with which we approached the former subject, contemplate the scene which the first verse of the thirteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel offers to our view. “ Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

What important, what overwhelming thoughts appear to have crowded into the mind of the blessed Jesus! When “ his hour was come ”—that dread crisis from which his human nature re-

coiled, and started back with horror, as if the weight of suffering was too heavy for Him to bear: as if his heart and flesh fainted when He entered the dark cloud of his atoning agony. It is this hour of which He speaks when, suddenly arrested by the thought, He says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." It is this which seems to rise in fearful prospect when He exclaims, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" Shall I at once put off this load of misery, and refuse the cross, and ascend at once into the realms of bliss and glory? Shall I pray my Father to send twelve legions of angels to my rescue? Shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour?" No. I will endure the cross, and despise the shame. I will drink the cup. I will ransom man. "Lo I come to do thy will, O my God; I am content to do it; for, for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Such was the hour here spoken of.

But other thoughts claimed attention, and pressed upon the mind of Jesus. The passage, though rough, would soon translate Him from this land of woe and darkness to far different scenes. He was about to depart out of this world unto the Father. How calculated was the prospect of this transition to fill and absorb every fa-

culty of the soul ! He was soon to bid a long farewell to all his sufferings. He was no longer to be “ a man of sorrows, or acquainted with grief.” His tears were to flow no more. He was no longer to sigh, and look up to a far off heaven and a distant home. He was about to turn His back for ever upon sin, and pain, and grief, and re-enter the eternal sabbath of God’s bosom. But all that this contrast implies, what mortal being, what created intelligence, can fully comprehend ? Of the dark side of the picture we have indeed but a partial knowledge. Many can attest by sad experience that there is a mighty famine in this land ; that human life is full of pain ; that “ man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” But still we know only in part the clouds that overhung, the thorns that beset, the path of Jesus. If none were disposed to pity Him, neither were any able, though inclined, to sympathize with his wounded Spirit ; for no sorrow was like unto his sorrow. Our sins lay with a weight upon his heart which we can never know, and pressed Him down to depths of anguish, of felt desertion, and unmitigated woe, which no finite mind can fathom. If, then, we cannot penetrate beneath the mere surface of that region of sorrow in which the Saviour sojourned for our sakes, how much less can our capacities embrace

that infinitude of joy which was set before Him, that heaven of bliss which at this moment opened wide its bosom to his view. If “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,” how much less could mortal vision bear the effulgence of that glory in which the eternal Son dwelt with the eternal Father before the worlds were made? It was then at this important juncture, when such vast concerns, such overwhelming interests, when his atoning agonies, his release from all his pains and sorrows, his entrance into the full blaze of light ineffable, — when these lay in immediate prospect, and passed in quick succession before his view, it was then, we are told, that “having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” But the term “*love*” here, as in other parts of Scripture, means love in action, love in practical exercise, as is evident from the whole context of the passage. Thus we perceive in the Redeemer’s character a comprehensiveness, a power of attending at the same time to objects infinitely disproportioned in magnitude, and dissimilar in kind, which bespeaks a mind above the level of mere human nature, a mind of infinite comprehension, and boundless grasp.

XXXII.

WHY THE DYING SAINT FEELS PARTING LESS
THAN DO HIS SURVIVING FRIENDS.

I SHALL, in this reading, offer an observation in connexion with my last, which has, to my knowledge, sometimes administered comfort to a burdened heart. It not unfrequently occurs at the death of the righteous that, amidst all the consolations which cheer their sorrowing friends, one peculiar pang is felt; one pain additional to that which nature feels, and must feel, in parting.

It is this. The dying saint, transported by the prospect which opens to his view, absorbed in that light which shines down from eternity, seems so taken up with new interests and discoveries, as to have lost that sympathy which he had ever felt with the earthly sharers of his joys and sorrows. The companion of his bosom wonders that he has become so unlike himself as to enjoy a selfish pleasure in his own mere personal prospects, while she is to be left behind in the vale of tears, without his arm to lean on, his voice or smile to cheer her on her weary way. Formerly, a separation of but a few days was felt by both alike as if life

would be for the time but a blank or dreary waste. But now the case is altered. One party is willing and ready, nay glad, to quit home, leave family and earthly endearments all behind, and embark for a distant land; while to the other, parting is more full of pain than ever, and the last farewell the bitterest of all.

To my knowledge, as I said before, these thoughts have sometimes heaped sorrow upon sorrow, and left the most painful sense of jealousy on the mind. But I have endeavoured to remove those feelings by what I conceive to be the true solution of the matter. When two persons, mutually attached, and bound by equally strong and tender ties, are about to part, the one who is leaving this world behind feels the separation, I admit, far less than the one who is still constrained to dwell below? But why? Not assuredly from lessening affection, not that new interests so fill the soul that it has now no longer room for the dearest objects upon earth. No, this thought indeed might well be painful. But it is because that when eternity, as it were, opens in its immensity, and time appears by the overwhelming contrast but vanity and nothingness, there is such a vivid sense in the soul, while standing upon the brink of both worlds, that the separation will be but for a moment, that it hardly

deserves the name of parting. That this is the real cause of that apparent want of sympathy for mourning friends, I have myself no doubt. It has, in fact, its cause and origin in the fundamental laws and deepest instincts of our nature. We cannot feel for suffering just in proportion to what reason tells us to be its real pressure and abstract magnitude. If we see a fellow creature pressed down by sorrow, yet if we have the means of knowing what the sufferer does not know, namely, that deliverance is near at hand, we cannot deeply sympathize with his distress, however grievous for the present that distress may be. If I saw a parent bowed down with affliction at the supposed loss of a beloved child, who in heedless infancy had strayed from home, yet if I had found that child, and was upon the point of restoring it to the parent's arms, my nature is so constituted that I could but slightly feel for what I knew to be a delusive sorrow which would soon be over. Nay, I should almost feel complacency in those bitter pangs which I knew would only enhance the joyfulness of the tidings which I had so shortly to announce. On this principle then it is, that the departing saint is full of joyful anticipations of re-union with the friends so loved, while they, whatever reason and faith may say, can alas ! but faintly perceive the distant object through the

cloud of sorrow. It is thus that he is often dressed in smiles while they are bathed in tears, because he has an actual realizing vision of what they know only in theory, or see through a glass darkly.

Still, all this betrays, though no want of true affection, yet, the imperfection and narrowness of mere human nature.

But it was not so with Him who was more than man. With objects of such immeasurable importance, as we adverted to in my last, before Him, with eternity and the glory of the Divine Majesty full in view, He gave Himself as entirely, and, to all practical purposes, as undividedly to the concerns of his little flock on earth, as if He had no other office to sustain or character to bear than that of the simple shepherd of those sheep. “Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” Here we are to understand, as I said before, the term *loved* as implying love in exercise, love as embodied in the action He was about to perform. But how was the act of our Saviour’s washing the disciples’ feet a manifestation of his love? It was an instance, doubtless, of condescension greater than imagination could have conceived, of humility partaking of the nature of infinitude. But how is love so peculiarly its characteristic as this passage would seem to intimate?

Here a deep principle seems to be involved. The late Archbishop Laurence, not less profound as a chemist than he was distinguished as a scholar, has affirmed, I am told, that all matter is ultimately resolvable into light. In the same manner, in the moral system, I believe that all is resolvable into love. For without love no grace, no virtue, could possess vitality or worth. Take, for instance, humility, purity, truth, patience, discretion, or any other moral quality, and they seem all but mere negatives—but means without an end, unless love come in, and fill the room which the expulsion of vicious occupants opens in the soul. In fact, other virtues only clear the mind of obstacles which prevent its return to its original level, and native element. Let us then compare these tendencies of nature with the revealed character of its Author.

Various qualities or properties, if we may use such terms, are in Scripture attributed to God. He is said to be all-powerful, just, holy. These, and many others, are his attributes. But there are only two things which God is affirmed substantively *to be*. All nature, no less than Scripture, proclaims that “*God is love.*” “And this is the message,” says the beloved disciple, “which we have heard of Him and declare unto you, That God is *light*, and in Him is no darkness at

all." Thus all things have an inherent tendency to return to their great Original.

The moral and material systems will resolve themselves into their pristine elements, when their impurities have been cleared off, their dross discharged, the leaven of evil purged away, and all offending matter effectually expelled. Then love will deck herself with light as with a garment, and all creation form one pure and faithful mirror to reflect back, in bright reality, and living truth, the image of its God !

XXXIII.

ON NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."—PSALM xc. 12.

SURELY if some angel, hitherto a stranger to our world, were for the first time to land upon these shores, he would scarcely believe the possibility of such inconsistencies as he would find. He would hear the history of our race,—how we were formed in God's image ; how we fell from God ; and how He so pitied us, amidst our ruins, that He sent his most blessed Son to save us. He would be told, moreover, that this world is but our

passage to another; that we are destined to live in bliss or misery for ever: that we are liable at every moment to be called into that unchangeable condition; and that upon our conduct here, depends our everlasting destiny. When he compared all this with the lives which the most of us are leading, and the interests they are pursuing, he would not bring a railing accusation against them, but would centre his main charge in one emphatic point, namely, that they are a *thoughtless* race. Yes, it is for a want of thought that such men pursue the phantoms which beguile them. It is not for want of exercising their intellectual powers, and putting them to their utmost stretch; for this they do, and often overdo. But this is not what I mean by thought. I mean a calm review of what we are, in our higher relations, and as it respects our endless prospects. I mean a calculation, not of what does not concern us, but of what *does* concern us, and that infinitely. This I call thought; but, whatever it be called, I mean thereby that sober seriousness of the soul, when dreams are dissipated, and realities rise before it; when, like the prodigal, the wandering spirit comes to itself, and its scattered powers return to their centre and their home. When this calm arrives, we are not far from the kingdom of God. No mere natural process, no energies or resolu-

tions of our own, can produce this peace. This subsidence into deep interior reflections is as unknown to many whose master minds can run with ease through all the labyrinths of science, or whose commanding talents can rule the destinies of nations,—this simplicity of still thought is as unknown to them, as is the unseen heaven of which that sabbath of the soul is both the faithful image and the opening dawn. Such thought is not so much an intellectual as a moral thing. It is “not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.” It is the first quickening of immortal life within us. It is the commencement of the new creature, when the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters. This, then, is the subject of that prayer which Moses, the writer of this Psalm, here offers up. It is a petition for the wisdom which is from above. It is in exact keeping with the devout aspiration of his own Divine song, (Deut. xxxii. 29,) “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!”

“*So teach us,*” says he, “to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” There may be a most accurate estimate, and practical calculation, of the shortness and uncertainty of life, which, strange to say, leave us as indifferent to eternity as if there were no world but this. In

the way of business, if, for instance, a man has an annuity to purchase, he may know, and take pains to make others believe, that he has, in all fair probability, but a few years to continue here. He can also use the strictest precaution lest any flaws or irregularities should invalidate his will ; which will, be it observed, can only take effect when the testator dies, or in other words, when he is himself in eternity. Such a one does number his days, and remember that he must die, and still so carry this earth into his calculations as wholly to shut out the concerns and prospects of his soul. What the Psalmist prayed for, and what we should pray for, is a heart-affecting and spirit-stirring sense that life is wearing fast away, and that we must shortly die : such a sense as may draw forth from the depths within us the following solemn reflections : “ Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is : that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth ; and mine age is as nothing before thee ; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.” (Psalm xxxix. 4, 5.) Let us continually remember that we are every moment in progress to the grave. We are like travellers aboard some vessel, or seated in some vehicle, which, whether we sleep or wake, whether we think of it or not, is still steadily

making way, and bringing us to our journey's end. Whether we eat or drink, however occupied or employed, in weal or in woe, in sunshine or in cloud, on we are going, and the distance between us and death is shortening. Thus it seems as if the great business of life were to die. Is it not then our wisdom to think of it, and to prepare?

Nor let it be said, that thus to consider our latter end, however wise and needful, must cast a veil of melancholy over the whole of life. Far from it. If we lay hold of the mercies which are freely offered us, what is the prospect of death but rest from all our labours, a blessed calm after all the storms of life? Is it, in such a world as this, a sad or a depressing thing to believe that, ere long, we shall be extricated from all its toils, and lift up our heads, and see that our redemption draweth nigh? Is it a gloomy thing to raise the telescope of faith, and see that better country,

“Where everlasting spring abides,
And never-fading flowers;”

Where—

“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand drest in living green?”

Is it a distressing, nay, is it not a transporting anticipation, to behold the faces of departed friends, much loved, rushing down to the shore to meet us, and above all, the Friend of friends, that

sticketh closer than a brother, with arms outstretched, and looks of condescending love, all ready to receive us? Let us believe in Him. Let us trust in Him. Let us lay hold on His salvation; and He will say to the swelling waves of Jordan, "Peace, be still." His mercy will arch the river, and bridge the foaming flood; and render death, with all its terrors, a smooth and easy passage into the paradise of God.

XXXIV.

ON OFFERING OURSELVES A LIVING SACRIFICE.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—ROM. xii. 1.

WHEN we are besought by such prevailing motives as "the mercies of our God," ought we not to feel disposed to undertake any duties, however difficult and distressing? Should we not stand prepared to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death?" Such is, most assu-

redly, the posture into which so affecting an exhortation should cast our souls. But is it to any hard service that we are called? What, we may ask, are those arduous duties, those painful trials, on which we are put, while motives of such unspeakable endearment are employed? What does the Lord our God require of us? It is to present our bodies—that is, as the term here manifestly implies, ourselves, with all our faculties and powers—as a living sacrifice unto God.

This dedication of ourselves is called “a living sacrifice,” to denote the animated nature of God’s service. True religion is not, as some imagine, a gloomy, sad, uninteresting thing. It is full of life. It awakens the soul to the most cheering, the most exhilarating prospects. It is true that, in a mere worldly course, there may, while youthful gaiety and natural spirits are unabated, be some transient gleams of joy: but these are quickly lost amidst the clouds which overhang this vale of tears. Trials and disappointments, ere long, teach the votaries of the world to say of the things they once enjoyed, “There is no pleasure in them.” But those who become a living sacrifice to God, find life at no period that cheerless thing. I do not mean to say, that *they* too will not have their seasons of depression,—that natural evils do not affect them,—that they do not feel the bitter-

ness of parting, and weep for the dead,—that they are not, at times, mourners for the sins of others, no less than for their own:—but I do say, that there is in true religion an inward spring, and healthful motion of all the faculties of the soul, which render life, upon the whole, a present blessing, and a foretaste of that heaven to which it leads. This is felt with peculiar gratitude as we advance in years. For the Christian's youth is never over. His earthly tabernacle may be bowing down, and mouldering in decay; but his prospects are cheering, bright, and boundless. His hopes are full of immortality. His soul has all the freshness of opening spring. He is not like a man who is spending the capital of his fortune; and who, amidst all his pleasures, is often scared with the remembrance that his resources are running out. He lives upon the present interest of a fund which is laid up in heaven; and this enables him to spend without one anxious fear that his treasure will be exhausted, and leave him poor at last.

Would you then present yourselves a living sacrifice to God? Look within. The Christian's main business lies enclosed in the sanctuary,—his own bosom. All should be well ordered there. No outward concerns are of importance compared to that which passes in our souls. Let us see well,

then, that our thoughts are pure, our tempers even, and our affections set on things above. It is in that calm retirement alone, that we can offer up the incense of such prayer as God will be inclined to hear;—for “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” To lead this interior life is to become a living and a holy sacrifice. Thus to live is the only happiness on this side of heaven. These are the green pastures and the clear fountains, beside which that flock repose whom the true Shepherd leads away from the madness and the ruin of this tumultuous world. There He refreshes them with the abundance of peace. There He appoints them their daily task, to dress and to keep their inward paradise in which the trees of God’s own planting grow. This is the secret pavilion in which God keeps His people from the strife of tongues : where they offer up the morning and the evening sacrifice, and antedate the joys of heaven.

XXXV.

ON SANCTIFICATION AS NECESSARY TO FUTURE
HAPPINESS.

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

JOHN xvii. 17.

SUCH is the prayer of the great Intercessor in behalf of His apostles ; and, after them, of all His followers to the end of the world. It is God's unchangeable decree, that, “ Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” And such is the very nature of the kingdom of heaven itself, that it is as necessary for the soul to become holy, in order that it may enter into it, as it is necessary that we should have eyes that we may see, or ears that we may hear. Heaven is a state of being, rather than a place. The salvation of man is not his being, by any partiality, interest, favour, or indulgence, rescued from some dark, and dreary, and miserable abode ; and being admitted into some cheerful, splendid, and glorious habitation. Doubtless, there will be, even in these respects, an unspeakable contrast between heaven and hell. But the essential difference is spiritual and moral. The soul which changes from being earthly,

sensual. and devilish, to being heavenly, pure, and Godlike, passes by that change, even here, into the state of blessedness—into the confines of another world—into the dawn of eternity, and into the kingdom of heaven. While, on the other hand, to suppose an unholy soul to participate, here or hereafter, in the kingdom of Christ, is to suppose an absolute contradiction in the nature of things. It is the same kind of mistake, as if you were to chain two enemies together, and call that union friendship; as if you were, by way of kindness, to force a man in all the loathing of disease, to sit down at a luxurious and convivial repast. It is, then, indispensable to our present and everlasting welfare, that we should become holy. And our Lord consequently prays, in the words before us, that we may be *sanctified*. To sanctify ourselves, is not in our power. We may indeed, to a certain extent, control our outward actions: but to cleanse the thoughts and intentions of the heart—to attain to inward peace, and liberty, and happiness—is a work, in which all our unaided efforts must be for ever fruitless. He alone who at creation said, “Let there be light; and there was light,”—who to the raging of the winds and waters said, “Peace, be still,”—He alone can cause light to rise upon the darkness of the natural mind, and calm all the inquietudes and

perturbations of the heart. The sanctification of the human soul, then, is the gift of God, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. But, in this operation, the Divine Agent acts by means. The truth, as revealed in Scripture, is the great instrument by which the Spirit works upon the mind of man. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The Spirit ordinarily reveals no truths which are not written in God's word. But He prepares the heart, and enlightens the mind, to understand and apply that word. He purifies and clears the intellectual faculties; and gently moves and warms the affections, so that the mind can penetrate and feel the saving truths of the Gospel. The Scripture is the great rule of life; but unless the Spirit of God opens to us the meaning of the Scripture, it remains to us a sealed book, and a dead letter. And thus it is, that many people for a series of years read the Bible, and make it a practice to read the Psalms and Lessons appointed for every day, without any feeling correspondent to the awakening and awful truths contained therein.

It is surprising that every thinking mind does not perceive, that there is something not to be accounted for, on common principles, in this fact. Suppose a proclamation were posted up in any public place of resort, holding out large pecuniary

rewards to those who complied with certain requisitions; and denouncing heavy penalties against those who refused compliance. This, we may be assured, would be read, considered, and acted on. How then is it, that a proclamation from the dread Majesty of God, offering unfading crowns and treasures, and threatening endless ruin and destruction, should produce, in general, no suitable effect? Is it that, in such cases, men altogether disbelieve the Scriptures? Far from it. They freely and sincerely subscribe to them, as the word of God. Is it that though the Scriptures *do* awaken in them hopes, and fears, yet the temptations of sin still more imperiously control them? By no means. For this would imply a state of conflict and disturbance, the very opposite of that indifference and unconcern, which are assuredly the prevalent evil in religious matters.

How is it to be accounted for, that matters of comparatively trifling moment, command attention, and rouse men to practical exertion—and that prospects, which they themselves allow to be unspeakably and infinitely important, are powerless in their operation on the mind? There is but one answer which can be given. The Scriptures are a revelation from God—they relate to invisible and eternal things—and it is not man's mere natural understanding which does or can take cog-

nizance of these concerns. The letter of Scripture a man may know, by his natural powers ; but the spirit of Scripture no man can know, but by the Spirit of God enlightening him. It is thus that the profoundest reasoners, and deepest scholars, have sometimes read the Scripture, criticized its language, proved triumphantly its authenticity, and remained, in life and temper, as far from God as if they had never heard His name ;—while the poor and ignorant man, who could hardly read his Bible, can sometimes spell out enough to make him happy—can spell out in those Scriptures, that he is a child of God, that the blood of Christ has cleansed him from his sins, and that he will wear a crown of righteousness in Heaven—can there drink in wisdom at the fountain-head, feed on angels' food, and understand the secret of the Almighty. But, that you may not conceive that these opinions are singular, or put in too strong language, allow me to quote upon the subject, the words of Bishop Taylor, one of the profoundest divines, and greatest men, our Church has had to boast at any period. He inquires why it is, that two men will sit down to the Scripture, both with capable understandings, both equally believing what they read ; and still, that the effect will be quite different. “The reason then,” he says, “is this. The one understands, by nature ; the other,

by grace—the one, by human learning; the other, by divine. The one reads Scripture without; the other within. The one understands, as a son of man; the other, as a son of God—the one, by the proportions³ of the world; the other, by the measures of the Spirit. The one understands, by reason; the other by love,—and therefore he does not only understand the doctrines of the Spirit, and perceive their meaning; but he pierces deeper, and knows the *meaning* of that meaning; that is, the secret of the Spirit,—that which is spiritually discerned—that which gives life to the proposition, and activity to the soul. And the reason is, that he hath a divine principle within, and a new understanding.” But a greater than Bishop Taylor, St. Paul, declares; “We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” And our Lord Himself, in full accordance with his Apostle, thus expresses Himself: “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.” “But blessed,” says He to his disciples, “are your eyes,

for they see; and your ears, for they hear." Such is the plain testimony of Scripture; and, blessed be God, many living witnesses can attest, by their own experience, what all this means.

XXXVI.

ON STILLING THE TEMPEST.

"Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm."—LUKE viii. 22—24.

"Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the Lake. And they launched forth." (ver. 22.)

It was our Saviour's frequent habit to pass over with his disciples, from one side of the lake of Gennesaret to the other. And in such repeated removals and transitions, we are reminded how in all ages those who follow Him are "emptied from

vessel to vessel ;” are kept from “settling,” like Moab, “upon their lees,” and thus are continually taught that they are not “yet come to the rest and to the inheritance” that God hath prepared for them. No sooner are they disposed to say, “Peace and safety ;” no sooner do things begin to wear a calm and settled aspect ; no sooner are they tempted to say, “Now my trials are over—I have conquered my difficulties—I shall be tossed to and fro no more,”—than some sudden breach is made upon their comforts ; some unlooked-for change arrives ; some stone is removed from the arch by which their earthly happiness was supported. They are summoned to some distant place : some friend or relative is called away : death seizes upon some beloved member of the domestic circle ;—the charm is dissolved—the illusion vanishes—the dream of an earthly paradise is over—the scene is changed, it passes into the chambers of remembrance, and joins the years beyond the flood. Thus are we called by a watchful Providence, often to leave some beloved shore, to bid farewell to some spot to which our heart adhered too closely ; and to “launch forth” into the deep, with nought before us, but the cold and cheerless prospect of landing upon a foreign soil, and finding ourselves in the midst of strangers.

“But as they sailed he fell asleep : and there

came down a storm of wind on the lake." (ver. 23.)

Can anything be more touching, or call forth more the deep-toned gratitude of the heart, than to see that Being, who made the stars, and measured out the heavens, glad to seize a hasty interval of repose, and make his bed in the hinder part of a rude fishing-boat? Fatigued with labours of love, He gave to that nature, all whose innocent infirmities He had taken upon Him, some needful rest. "As they sailed, he fell asleep." But ere long, a storm of wind disturbed the bosom of the lake. All was alarm and consternation around Him; "the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear." But his breast was serene and tranquil, as the heaven from which he came. And oh! if in the person of Him who was perfect God, and perfect man; if, in that mysterious union, the divine could so actuate the mortal nature, as to bring before the human soul of Jesus visions which none but God could see;—what dreams of bliss, and heaven, and glory, might have filled the spotless bosom of the Lamb of God, while He thus, in great humility, laid Him down to sleep and take his rest! How ineffable the contrast—how infinite the disparity—how immeasurable the distance, at that moment—between what passed

around, and what passed within, that temple of the living God !

But upon these bright pictures of the imagination—though in their proper place both innocent and pleasant, and not without their salutary uses to the mind—we cannot build, as upon matters of certain truth. For “no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son.” “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God ; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever.” Let us then learn, as we contemplate the Saviour asleep amidst the storms and waves, so to live each day in this tempestuous world, that we may lie down at night at peace with God and man. Let us go to our beds in the same frame as we would desire to go to our graves. Let us pray that that Divine Protector who was about our path by day, may be about our bed at night—that, if we lie awake, our thoughts may be pure and cheerful, and such as tend to God ; and that if we sleep, our “very dreams may be devout.”

“ And they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.”

As long as the vessel continued to exclude the encircling element, she and all she contained were safe. But as soon as she let in the water, she began to sink. So it is precisely with those who

pass the waves of this troublesome world. While they preserve their distinctness from it; while they are not of the world; while they are free from the burden of sin; they are then, as it were, lighter than the element on which they are cast, and float upon its surface. But if the world, with all its perplexities, its cares, and troubles, gains admission into the heaven-bound vessel, she begins to sink. As with the literal vessel, when the water fills her cavities, her solid defences serve only, by increasing her specific gravity, to drag her to the bottom;—so, when the spirit of the world enters into a soul which the breath of heaven had filled before, every privilege, every conviction, every responsibility, which had made it differ from others, are now no longer for it, but against it, and sink it far lower than the average level of the world. Thus the spiritual deserter cannot mingle with, and be lost in, the general mass. He cannot fall into the ranks of the men of this world. He has a mark upon him, which they do not bear. He is branded with apostacy. He is like “salt that has lost his savour, and is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

But to turn the passage before us, to a sense more applicable to daily and familiar habits. We, like the ship amidst the storms and waves, have,

all, our troubles, trials, and perplexities. None are without them : they press on every side : they are like the circumambient air. Let us then guard the door of our hearts, lest we should let them in. Let us, as far as duty calls, attend to the concerns of life, and give to them the labours of the head. But let us by prayer and watchfulness exclude them from those inward chambers, where peace, and the presence of God, alone should dwell. If we leave an opening for them, they will rush in, and sink us down into gloom and wretchedness. It is thus alone that we can keep above that sea of troubles, on which we all are sailing. *All*, I say—for “man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards;” and every individual has cares enough to press him down, if he suffer this legion to enter into him. In this view, what wrong estimates are we apt to form of the comparative happiness of men ! The great distinction in this important matter, lies not in being high, or low,—rich, or poor—in prosperity, or adversity. It lies in this—to one man the world, with its business and its anxieties, is a thing without him : he can attend to it or not, as he pleases, and feels that duty calls him. To another man, the world is a thing *within* him. It has forced its way into the inward citadel of his soul. It has left him no chamber of thought, which he can call his own.

He has no place to flee unto ; no calm retreat, or silent shade within.

“ And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water : and they ceased, and there was a calm.” (ver. 24.)

The slumbers of the blessed Jesus were not long without disturbance. The intervals of His repose were of short continuance. His disciples call on Him in their trouble : the cry of “ Master, master, we perish,” sounded in his ears ; and He who came down to save them, could not be insensible to their distress. He felt for them with all the sympathy of a man. He rose in the power of the Majesty of God ; “ and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water : and they ceased, and there was a calm.” Can imagination picture to itself, or can it enter into the heart of a man to conceive, a spectacle more sublime or magnificent, than is here presented ? Yes—there is one which far transcends it. But it is a spectacle which the natural eye cannot behold ; which the eye of the carnal mind cannot perceive. It is visible to the eye of faith alone. It is perceptible to him alone who, like the Apocalyptic beasts, is full of eyes within, and witnesses in the interior regions of his soul that scene of which the stilling of the tempest on the lake was but an emblem,

the material draught or copy. He, and he alone, can comprehend, though in vain he would describe, the nature and the blessedness of that calm which reigns within, when a Saviour's voice is heard to say to every fear which threatenings of just vengeance can awake, to every distressing thought which can arise in the heart, to every perturbation which can agitate the bosom, and to every anxious care which can disturb the tranquillity of the soul, "Peace, be still."

XXXVII.

ON CHRIST'S FEET ANOINTED.

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake unto himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith,

Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.”—LUKE vii. 36—50.

It appears to have been our Saviour’s object, on this most interesting occasion, to show the utter delusion, in which the Pharisee and all self-righteous professors are involved. *He* conceived himself fully entitled to the Divine favour, while the penitent at Jesus’ feet was excluded for ever from that prime blessing. Our Lord, then, shows him, if he had eyes to see, that their relative positions were precisely the reverse ;—that the woman, though once a wanderer, was now a

sheep brought home to the fold; justified, pardoned, and reconciled to God;—while he who condemned her, was, at that very moment, a stranger from the covenants of promise, and without God in the world. And this the Pharisee is led to demonstrate, by his own verdict upon a given case. Of two debtors, one in a lesser, the other in a greater sum, but both freely forgiven by their generous creditor, it is asked, “Which of them will love Him most?” Simon, judging rightly, answers, “He to whom He forgave most.” But are we here to suppose, as some mistakenly have done, that the debtor in five hundred pence means the sinner who has still more deeply sunk in abandonment and vileness than he who owed the fifty;—and that, if pardoned, he would love, with greater ardour and intensity, than the other? God forbid. What can be more withering to all the highest, holiest hopes of youth, than to say, as this doctrine does, “If, like Obadiah, you serve God from your youth, and, like Samuel, grow before the Lord, you will gain nothing thereby but an incapacity to love Him with the entire affections of the heart. Go then, and steep yourselves in foulness, impurity, and vice; that you may thus qualify yourselves for the keeping of the first and great commandment?” No. He who owed the five hundred pence, represents the

sinner, who knows the plague of his own heart ; who feels his sins to be numberless as the hairs of his own head, without palliation and without excuse. On the other hand, the debtor in fifty pence stands for him who lays a flattering unction to his own soul, and says, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." This contrast is distinctly recognized, Mark ii. 17. "When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick : I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

But how does our Lord prove to which of these classes the parties now before Him respectively belong? He proves it by their conduct towards Him. He points the attention of Simon to the woman at that very instant bathing his feet with her tears, and exhibiting the most affecting tokens of devoted attachment. He contrasts this with the cold neglect which the Pharisee had, in many instances, evinced. Here then were the proofs before his eyes. This penitent was not an outcast, as he supposed ; but one whose sins were pardoned, who was a "daughter of the Lord Almighty"—"for she loved much." These fruits could grow on no branch which was not grafted into the true Vine ; could proceed from no source but that faith, which justifies before God, and works by love. On the contrary, the Pharisee, if

not blinded, might have known that *his* sins, little in his own view, but so much the greater in the sight of God, were still unpardoned; that he, and not the woman, was, in God's conception of the term, *the sinner*;—because he presented to Jesus, the centre of the Divine attractions, a cold and alienated heart.

XXXVIII.

ON THE DEATH OF MOSES.

THERE is no small difficulty in ascertaining the precise nature of that crime, which excluded Moses from the land of Canaan. And, perhaps, one use of this obscurity may be, to impress the necessity of the closest watchfulness and self-inspection. Let us then turn it to practical account, and thus commune with our own hearts. “If God thus visited with so severe a chastisement a servant approved as Moses: if God thus chastened him, for a disobedience of so recondite a nature that we, before whom the whole transaction stands revealed, cannot find the accursed thing, nor discern where the blot or failure lies,—‘who then can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret

faults. Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' ”

Amongst the various opinions on this subject, there is none, perhaps, which bids more fairly for a preference, than that suggested by Bishop Patrick, namely, “ that the water now ceasing at the time that Miriam died, Moses was very sad, both for her death, and perhaps for the ceasing of the water; and being unexpectedly assaulted by the people, who ought to have had a greater reverence for him, in a time of mourning especially, it was the occasion of a greater commotion of anger and indignation than was usually in him.” This might have led him to impatience, and drawn from him that rash expression, “ Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” If the grief of Moses for a beloved sister, amiable as such afflictions are, led thus to sinfulness, how well does it become us to watch and pray in seasons of similar temptation! To be sensible to the touch of sorrow; to feel that “no chastening for the present is joyous but grievous;” to mourn for departed friends, and to know the anguish of a bleeding heart,—this is not sinful: for Jesus wept for Lazarus. He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” But, as long

as patience has its perfect work, there is a softness and meekness in deep distress; there is a calm immoveable resignation of the soul, which keeps it in communication with the peace of Heaven. The appeal which silently ascends, reaches the ears of Him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; whose heart is true to human sympathy; who is Himself "afflicted in all the afflictions" which He, for our needful chastisement, unwillingly dispenses. But there are temptations which peculiarly beset the troubled mind. When the heart is sorely wounded, it is ill fitted to repel the rude assaults of such a world as this. Depression is often irritable; and interruptions are unwelcome to him that seeks the loneliness of sorrow. Satan has snares for the house of mourning, no less than for the house of feasting. He can vitiate and distort the process by which alone comfort can reach the desolated heart. He can goad anguish into fretfulness, and stimulate into action, those tempers which separate between a soul and God. He can thus rob the mourner of his only consolation, and turn his sorrow into sin. He can deprive his disease of its healing remedy, and tear the salve from his bleeding wounds. Such are the devices of him who hates us. Let us confront them with the wise counsel of St. James: "Is any among you afflicted? Let

nim pray." Let us, in every bereavement and every trouble, remember the patience of Job, how "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

That Moses passed at once from the toils of earth into that celestial glory in which he appeared, without a veil, upon the mount of transfiguration, there can be no reasonable grounds for doubting; and yet we see that his trespass precluded his entrance into the earthly Canaan. From Pisgah he ascended to a celestial paradise, though he failed to attain to the land of promise. Thus many, it is my firm belief, will enjoy the rest prepared for the people of God, above, who have not grace so abundant as to realize to themselves that rest below. The babe in Christ may rejoice in full assurance of everlasting blessedness, while much infirmity, and much remaining dross may mar his present tranquillity and peace. From the very nature of the case it must be so. If we "love righteousness and hate iniquity;" if we "consent unto the law that it is good;" if we "delight in the law of God, after the inward man;" it is clear that we must be happy where all is pure and holy; where nothing meets our view but innocence, blessedness, and love; where there are no trials, no sounds of discord, nor scenes of vice; where this vile body and clod of earth

shall become spiritual and celestial; in harmony with every wish, and in sympathy with every movement of the soul.

But it is equally self-evident that the soul which is capable of consummate happiness in a congenial element, may not be so "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," as to bear up under all the pressure, and against all the storms, of this miserable and heart-trying world. This thought, it is true, may be perverted and abused. It may be said, "Oh, then, if anything short of the highest standard of holiness will prepare us for future happiness, we need not work out our salvation with so much fear and trembling. What can we want beyond a place in heaven?" A mind thus low and mercenary, it need not be said, is wholly devoid of that which this whole argument supposes as the essential qualification for the very happiness for which it thus vainly bargains, namely, the love of goodness and of God. But where the true light has visited no wish to make cheap terms for heaven can enter. Holiness is then desired for its own sake. No man says to his earthly physician, "Is all this health you speak of necessary? May I not be indulged with a few more tossings upon my bed? Must I give up all my sleepless nights, and part with all my pains?" If no man in his senses would use this language

in reference to his body, why should we be unwilling that the Great Physician should heal the far worse distempers of the soul? No; if we understand the true nature of salvation, we shall adopt the devout petition of the psalmist, "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

XXXIX.

ON DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 29.

"O THAT they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Whatever may be the application of these words in their immediate context, they serve, like many other passages of Scripture, as a kind of master-key. They meet every circumstance under which erring mortals can be found, and fit every lock by which man can be shut up in the dark enclosures of sin and misery. And surely, if words can exhibit the marks of flowing from a tender father's lips, this language bears that soft impression. These are not the accents nor anxieties which belong to one who "has pleasure in the death of him that dieth." Are they not like the yearnings of a parent's heart, or like the voice of the good Shepherd,

who loved his sheep, and gave Himself for them?

“O that men were wise—that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end!” These three aspirations seem but the reiteration of the same devout and ardent wish. For to possess the wisdom from above, is but another name for understanding with the heart the things of God. And what is truly to consider our latter end, but to lift our thoughts, and elevate our affections, to those celestial objects and divine realities which last for ever?

But to make one or two more particular applications of these emphatic words:—and first of all to youth. The latter end of youth, properly speaking, is manhood: for as one begins the other ends. Too often do young persons, as they ripen towards maturity, seem as if true manhood consisted in throwing off rather the sweet simplicity, than the heedless follies of their childhood. They shoot up, like ill-trained plants, in a wrong direction, and ripen in a wrong way. Their mere animal propensities progress, and their better principles decline. They take counsel of companions headstrong and foolish as themselves, and not of God, of parents, or of good advisers. They feel as if they had risen above religion, and refuse to be bound by its silken cords. O that they were wise,

and would consider that if their days are not cut short in righteous judgment, this folly must issue in a despicable and unhappy manhood. O that they would reason rightly, and thus resolve. "Now is the only seed-time of my life, and, with God's blessing, I will sow. My parents watched over me in infancy with tender care; and I will prepare myself to be a comfort to them, a prop and solace amidst their toils and cares. From God I have received my strength, my buoyant spirits, my opening faculties, and the energies of my youth, and to Him who gave me all I now devote them. And He will never leave me, nor forsake me. He will stand by me when I most want his aid. He will be my staff and my support when I am declining in the vale of years; and will turn the last shades of evening, and the darkness of a dying hour, into the morning of a never-ending day."

Let all that are blessed with present health, and wealth, and prosperity, learn the important lessons of the words before us. Let them follow the bright example of Him who, amidst the glories of his transfiguration, "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." "The cloudy and dark day" may be near at hand, while the surrounding landscape smiles, and sunshine gladdens all the face of nature. Let us then pre-

pare to meet it. Let us not say to our soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" when this very night we may cease to be inhabitants of this earth, and have taken our flight beyond the stars. Let us call to mind how soon the rich man's purple and fine linen were exchanged for the winding-sheet of death, and his glittering mansion for the dark abode of hell.

On the other hand, let the believer, when want depresses, and affliction bows him down, remember Lazarus, and how his troubles ended; how "It came to pass the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Let him "consider his latter end;" and this will be a medicine for all his sorrows. They may be hard to bear, but they will soon be over. They may be grievous now, but they will be turned into joy. His "light affliction, which is but for a moment, will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

XL.

RIZPAH THE DAUGHTER OF AIAH. 2 SAM. XXI.
10.

WHEN Israel had been visited with a three years' famine, "David inquired of the Lord.

And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." If this alluded to the destruction of the city of Nob, in which the Gibeonites lived, (1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19,) it may appear extraordinary that punishment for so inhuman a transaction, in violation of a solemn oath, should have been delayed for forty years. But here the observation of Arbabinel, quoted by Bishop Patrick, well applies. "God hath excellent reasons why he punishes sinners not now, but hereafter; and knows which of their children are more worthy to be punished, and bear the iniquity of their fathers. And the longer He stays before He strikes, the more evident it is that He doth not forget what the evil men have done, though He doth not immediately declare his anger against it." David then inquires of the Gibeonites, what recompense he should make for the injury done to their kindred, that the wrath of God may be appeased, and his judgments may be averted. The satisfaction required was *in kind*, blood for blood, and life for life. "Let seven men of his (Saul's) sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord, in Gibeah of Saul." But how is it consistent with God's retributive justice, that, as we frequently find in Scripture, the sins of the fathers should be visited upon their children? Why should one suffer for

the crimes of another? Why should the child be subjected to a long process of pain, for guilt which he did not himself contract, while the offending party is now beyond the reach either of seeing or knowing, the miseries he has occasioned? To this I answer :—

1. That the son, if he tread not in his father's steps, will inherit no entail of suffering; of any suffering, at least, which may not be turned to his everlasting benefit.

2. That parents may, for what we know, witness in their invisible abodes the trains of miseries which their sins have laid on earth; and if they have not repented while the day of grace continued, may receive the due reward of their deeds, by seeing and hearing the afflictions and lamentations of their descendants; sorrows which may be turned into joy to *them*, but which can yield no fruits but those of bitterness, in regions where no such happy transmutations can take place.

The seven expiatory victims selected were (for what reason we are not told,) the sons of Aiah, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul. These were to be “hanged in the hill before the Lord,” and to be exposed to public view, till the satisfaction of the Divine justice was manifested by the removal of

the continued drought and attendant famine, with which the land had been so long afflicted.

And here a tender scene presents itself. Amidst jarring elements, political conflicts, and the stern proceedings of what is sometimes public justice in the sight of man, and public injustice in the sight of God, we witness with soft emotion and pensive pleasure, the gentle movements of private feeling and personal attachment. We turn aside from the collisions and tumult of a harsh and bustling world, to contemplate the picture of a mother's tenderness; a picture drawn by Him who knows all that labours in the human bosom; of Him who sees in every instance of patient, unchanging, and constant love, but the copy of His own heart; a drop from the fountain of his own unbounded charity. "And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."

To enlarge upon these pathetic words, would be only to blunt the impression which they are so divinely fitted to make upon every feeling mind. But why, it may be asked, do passages like these occur in Scripture? In the brief sketch before

us, no doctrine is enforced—no duty is enjoined: nor do the sorrows and maternal tenderness of Rizpah form any important link in the general history of her times. And yet “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.” What then have we to learn from these affecting words? The understanding, it is true, derives from them no addition to its stores of knowledge: but if we feel them as we ought, the picture thus set before us, cannot but meliorate and improve the heart.

Let us learn then from this lesson, how those united in domestic bonds, and by the ties of family, should love one another. You think that if some dear relations were, like Armoni and Mephibosheth, snatched from you by some violent stroke—nay, if death with the gentlest hand were to remove them from before your eyes—you would cleave, as Rizpah did, to their dear remains. Well then, if they still are spared to you, show your gratitude to so kind a Providence, by daily offices of love. Make their lives as happy as you can. Cause them no needless sorrows. Vex them with no petty irritations. As far as you are able, let not the winds of heaven visit their face too roughly; suffer neither the cares of life to rest on them by day, nor the anxieties of the world by night.

XLI.

NAAMAN THE SYRIAN. 2 KINGS V.

IN Naaman, of whom we read an account in 2 Kings, v., we have a striking instance of the vanity of human greatness; and are taught by that graphic sketch, how thorough a deception the happiness of this world often is. Naaman stood precisely in that position, which is, perhaps, more than any other, the object of popular envy and ambition. His profession was that with which gaiety and brilliancy are naturally associated. He was surrounded with all the pomp and circumstance of military command. He was "captain of the host of Benhadad the king of Syria," and commander of all his forces. He was, moreover, "a great man with his master," a favourite at court, whom "the king delighted to honour." He was one of those envied beings who live in the sunshine of the royal smile, and have free access to their prince's ear. Nor was he, as many have been, raised to this eminence merely that he might amuse his master, participate in his pleasures, or pander to his vices. No; he was "honourable." Both king and people revered and respected him; "because by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria." As he passed

through the streets, his deeds were celebrated in popular songs, and his approach was hailed by martial bands of music ; and wherever he appeared, the voice of a great and admiring people seemed to say, "There goes the saviour of his country." Nor was it to, as it is termed, the mere fortune of war, that his success was owing : nor had he lived to be but the mere shadow of what he was ; and only to remember that such things were. No. His courage was high as ever. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated." He was ready to reap fresh laurels, and obtain new triumphs. "He was also a mighty man in valour." Such was Naaman,—and yet, "Lord, what is man?" "Every one," says Matthew Henry, "has some *but* or other in his character, something that blemishes and diminishes him, some allay to his grandeur, some damp to his joy." Naaman was, to outward appearance, (for tricks and contrivances of art might have concealed his sad secret from public view,) the happiest of men. In semblance, and in show, he was the concentration of brilliancy and glory. He was all that ambition paints, and all that man bows down to ; "but—he was a leper." Abroad, he was the envied idol of the world. At home, he was loathed ; or, what the proud dread more, was pitied by every inmate of his house. He was ad-

dressed in the language of respect; but he saw in every eye what Bishop Hall has so pointedly expressed, that “the basest slave in Syria would not change skins with him.”

As a proof how many feel who appear happy to the world, I would relate the following circumstance: it was mentioned by a distinguished clergyman at a public meeting which I attended. This clergyman was, as he told us, once walking in the streets of Dublin, in a somewhat musing frame. At such a moment, there passed by a splendid equipage, driven by one whose brilliant and imposing figure attracted his peculiar attention. He said to himself, “There perhaps is one of those whom the Psalmist so graphically describes, while he complains of his own infirmities. ‘I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.’ ” In a day or two after, a clerical friend met this minister, and said, “I am just about to leave town; but in doing so, I feel one source of much regret. I shall be obliged by my absence to discontinue my pastoral visits to one for whom I feel the deepest

interest. It would, however, be a great satisfaction to him and me, if I could commit that person to your care. Will you allow me, then, to introduce you to his acquaintance?" He at once consented, and accordingly was conducted by his friend to the residence of his spiritual patient. Every thing there bespoke both fortune and fashion. Furniture, servants, all were of a piece, and all denoted wealth and prosperity. The two ministers were shown into a splendid apartment, where they waited for some time. At length the door was opened—and in entered the very figure which had made so brilliant an appearance in the streets, and which had caused all the musings, and "thoughts of heart" before related. Upon the parties being introduced, this imposing personage commenced the conversation in these words: "You see before you one of the most unhappy and unfortunate of human beings!"

XLII.

DECEMBER 27, ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S
DAY.

St. John, whose festival is this day celebrated, was, in a peculiar manner, the apostle of love.

He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and was admitted to the closest intercourse with Him; he lay in his bosom, and was unto him as his own familiar friend. John, having loved his Saviour through all his trials and temptations, “loved Him unto the end;” and, as a “brother born for adversity,” took his station near the cross on which the good shepherd gave his life for the sheep. It was amidst the agonies of that cross, that the blessed Jesus gave the last and tenderest proof of his affection, which the apostle himself describes with such touching simplicity: “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” (John ix. 26, 27.)

Recast and formed in the image of that God who is essential love, it had been no wonder if, in a spiritual, not a natural sense, this saying had gone abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; for the great principle, that “charity never faileth,” that love never dies, is the truth on which St. John delights to dwell as his chosen topic and his favourite theme. To believe, to love, and to live, seem with him to signify the same thing. He seems to have felt the

quickenings pulse of immortality in his own breast, and to have realized in his own soul the truth of our Saviour's emphatic words—"This do, (that is, keep the law of love,) and thou shalt live."

It is remarkable how this preacher of love has continually in view that glorious truth, that religion is the dawn of eternity, the morning of endless day, the beginning of an everlasting life; so that the spark once struck in the soul will never be extinguished, the sun once risen will never go down. Thus, with him, the great transition from a mortal to an immortal state, is not at the hour of natural death, but at the moment of conversion, at the instant when the soul first hears the voice which says,—“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” I shall cite a few passages in which this important truth is stated:—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John v. 24.) “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” (vi. 51.) “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth

and believeth in me shall never die." (xi. 25, 26.) "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (xvii. 3.) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John iii. 14.) Abundantly more might be quoted from this apostle—more, I will venture to say, than the whole of Scripture beside contains—in proof and maintenance of this heart-cheering truth; namely, that if we be now alive to God, we shall never die; that no dark line of separation lies athwart our onward path; that no Jordan interposes between the soul and the soul's eternal rest; that the veil of the temple has been rent in twain; and that the way is opened into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. What can be more reviving, more transporting, than this thought? Love, the easiest, happiest exercise of the soul—the heaven for which our hearts were formed—is but another name for deathless, endless life. How blessed, how blissful, must that eternity be, into which we are launched by a transition so gentle, so soothing, and so tranquillizing to the soul!

ESSAYS.

ESSAYS.

ESSAY I.

ON THE CESSATION OF MIRACLES IN THE CHURCH.

How long miraculous gifts continued in the Christian Church, it is not easy to determine. Some have placed their termination so early as the time of those upon whom the Apostles laid their hands. Others, with a far greater weight of authority, extend them till the reign of Constantine. And some would protract the period still beyond it. But at all events we, as Protestants, believe that the Church is no longer in possession of miraculous powers. If so, the question arises, why She has lost those gifts; why, when her ministers and missionaries go forth to preach the Gospel, God no longer “works with them, and confirms the word with signs following.”

It is said, I know, that miracles have ceased because they are no longer necessary ; that at the first establishment of the institution they were required, in order to give it a local habitation and a name on earth ; but that, that being effected, all interference with the regular order of events (an expedient which a wise Providence has recourse to with a parsimonious hand) was withdrawn. There is, no doubt, some truth in this, but still it is not, I believe, the whole truth. There are other considerations which may have induced the great Governor of the Church, and of the world, to “leave himself without the witness” which He once vouchsafed in the supernatural exhibition of his power.

We can scarcely affirm that miracles would be less conducive to the present extension, than they were to the first establishment of Christianity. If a set of missionaries were to present themselves in China or Hindostan, with power at a word to heal the sick, to give feet to the lame, eyes to the blind, and life to the dead ; is it not natural to suppose that extraordinary effects, in the way of conversions, would result ? And do these palpable attestations to the message of the Gospel, appear less called for in the streets of Pekin, than they were in the broad places of Jerusalem ? But it will be said, “Oh ! the Chinese know that Chris-

tianity is the established creed of the most refined and powerful nations of the earth." Grant it. But the question is what kind of thing it is, which under that sacred name, forms the popular religion of these countries? Let those Chinese sailors who, in London, are sometimes seen walking about the streets of the city, tell their friends at home what appearance those streets present at night when hell pours out all its foulest horrors. Let them report upon their return what Christianity is, not in theory but in practice. Or let the favoured few among the Mahommedans or heathen, who have been admitted into the brilliant circles of our metropolis, inform their countrymen what holy Sabbaths they have witnessed in Hyde Park in the mornings, or at some scene of dazzling revelry upon those evenings, which the missionary describes as calm and peaceful images of heaven. Or let those that have seen some of our regiments in their own land, without chaplains, without religious ordinances or means of grace, without one sign or symptom that they believe that there is a God or any state of existence after death—let them proclaim amongst their friends and kindred, what fruits the professing Church of Christ is bearing, and what benefits they would be likely to receive, from lodging beneath its branches. I advert to these painful matters, to show that

miracles are not less required for the propagation of Christianity in heathen lands, because of its establishment in countries which profess it, than they were at the first implantation of the system upon earth. And for this plain reason—that the practice is opposed to the theory of Christianity; and that the lives of Christians as a body, must necessarily be a strong argument against, and not for, the truth of their religion. And thus the missionary is rather shackled than aided, by the nominal profession of the Gospel, in the country from which he comes. It would indeed be otherwise if he could state the mere fact of its being the religion of his own country, amongst those who were wholly ignorant of the practice there. But some “out of every nation under heaven” have been at our Jerusalem; have got behind the curtain, and can tell strange stories of the scenes enacted there. The inhabitants of the West Indian Islands deprecated the idea of admission into that heaven of which the missionaries told them, when they heard (though I believe they would have been little troubled with their presence) that the Spaniards, their tyrants and tormentors, would be their companions in that place of happiness. And how has it been in the more recent contacts, into which the simple and untutored heathen has come, with the professing

Christian? What lessons has he learned? What lessons could he learn from men who are, I am convinced, as a body, more depraved and stained with a deeper die of guilt, than those could be who never heard of, and consequently never abused and trampled on, the name and blood of Christ. Yes: on the principle of *corruptio optimi pessima*, I do believe that the worst men on earth are Christians. And the worst Christians perhaps of all are those who have been most closely connected with the heathen. The use of gunpowder and weapons of death, the use of ardent spirits, and cruelties which might fill hell itself with horror;—these are the exhibitions which a dexterous opponent of our missionaries might point to and say, “Why, this system confutes and condemns itself. Judge it by its own rules, try it by its own test, and then embrace or reject it accordingly—‘Ye shall know them by their fruits.’” I do then believe that the existence, under the name of Christianity, of that which is a libel upon Christianity, I mean the popular religion of Christendom, is the greatest difficulty the missionary has to struggle with in the sowing of the Gospel seed in a new soil. I believe that if with the New Testament, so radiant with internal evidence that it comes from God, if with this blessed volume in his hand he could suddenly present him-

self, as Elijah did to Ahab, like one descended from the skies—if insulated, unconnected “after the order of Melchisedec,” “without father, without mother, without descent” he could appear as an abstract personification of the system which he taught—if he were the voice of one crying in the wilderness, he would require the aid of miracles amongst the heathen far less than he does, while he announces that the religion of their enemies, their corrupters and their persecutors, is the religion which he teaches as a system of meekness, purity, harmony, and love.

“What shall we then say to these things?” Does God withhold that evidence, which would be the means of giving extension to the Gospel, in lands of heathen darkness? I answer that even if miracles could effect that object, the same wise reasons which in point of fact *do* determine the Divine Providence to leave the heathen in their blindness, might induce Him, even on that supposition, to withhold miraculous agencies. There is nothing more startling in the idea that God should refuse to convert the world by miracles, than that He should abstain from converting it at all. The one lies as much beyond the limits of our knowledge as the other. There are nevertheless some partial lights, which seem to be thrown upon the subject of the cessation of miracles.

Were the Church of Christ true to herself, she would not be left without abundant witness of her Divine original, though no *natural* signs and wonders should attend her. Bishop Butler has argued that if any nation were for a length of ages perfectly virtuous, so that each individual had no desire, but in all things to promote the public good, not by aspiring above his sphere, but by humbly, contentedly, and diligently performing the part assigned him as most suitable to the scale and character of his mind—that nation would by degrees, and without force, subjugate the whole human family to its sway. In like manner, who can calculate what Christianity would have effected in the way of general diffusion, if all who bore its name had borne also its blessed fruits? If, not to speak of earlier times, the Spaniards in the west, and the Portuguese in the east, and the English wherever the British flag was flying, had each and every one been humble followers and successful imitators of Christ; if upon whatever shore they landed they had used their power and superior intelligence in teaching the blessings and preaching the Gospel of peace to its inhabitants; in healing their divisions, in appeasing their strifes, and pointing out to them the more excellent way of mutual forbearance and mutual love; if every Christian ship of war or trading vessel,

if every regiment that landed in a heathen port, brought amongst them none but men who bore the amiable marks and blessed fruits of pure and undefiled religion,—what miracles of physical power could equal this great moral miracle of man thus changed into the image of his God? Would not the beholders be irresistibly attracted? Would they not “falling down on their face worship God, and confess that God was in them of a truth?” All mankind are panting after happiness. This is the secret which they all desire to know. This is the hill whose bright and verdant summit all would reach; but whose steep ascent none can climb without some celestial hand to guide them. What other credentials then could such Israelites indeed require, than to show by their every movement, by the serenity of their air, and the illumination of their countenance, that they had in possession that priceless pearl, which all are seeking for, but which they alone had found.

This is I grant high colouring, and, compared with the actual state of things, it were wild extravagance to suppose it. And still where lies the fault, if the Church which Christ has purchased with his own blood, falls below the standard of perfection? “What could have been done more to his vineyard that He hath not done in it? Wherefore when He looketh that it should bring

forth grapes, doth it bring forth wild grapes?" How then does the case stand? Christianity once established in the world, once the professed religion of any one nation under heaven, possesses in the fruits which fidelity on her part would infallibly produce, the abundant means of her own diffusion. If then the Church has corrupted herself so that her fruit also is corrupt, if she has subjugated herself to the world, so that the light which is in her is darkness; is it to be supposed that God will, in her case, reverse that law which He has laid down as the rule and measure of his own conduct—"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath?" If the Church has hid her talent and been unfaithful in the employment of her gifts, is it consistent with the principles on which He acts and governs, that He should send miracles and signs and wonders to supply the place of those abundant aids and succours which He has graciously afforded, and which she has sacrilegiously thrown away? But it will be said, if the nations which now profess the Gospel neglect so great salvation, why should the heathen, who have had no offer of these blessings, be sufferers for another's crime? Why should God withhold the attestation of miracles, because

the Church withholds the still more constraining evidence of a heavenly conversation? To this we have only to answer, as we did before. There is no less difficulty in accounting for the fact that a wise and beneficent Providence leaves the heathen in an unconverted state at all, than that He leaves them in that state, because of the unfaithfulness of professing Christians. Nay indeed the latter supposition rather seems to throw a light upon this mysterious subject, and thus to “vindicate the ways of God to man.”

For if the notion here suggested, that Christianity once established is to propagate herself by her own internal evidence, be a true one, can any design appear more worthy of the wisdom and goodness of its Divine Author? For the design in fact amounts to this; that Christianity is destined to “enlarge the place of her tent, to lengthen her cords, and to break forth on the right hand and on the left” in exact proportion as she is fitted to benefit and bless mankind. Allow that Mahometan and heathen nations were compelled by miracles to believe so extraordinary a thing as that the religion current in European countries was a religion come from God,—would they gain, except in some temporal matters, any very important benefit? Say that missionaries with the Bible (though without living comments

what can the Bible do ?) in their hands and miracles to confirm its truth, might form societies in the midst of darkness, walking in purer light than shines upon our ancient Churches ; yet these societies would, in the natural course of things, soon be brought in contact with the main body of professing Christians. Our merchants and soldiers and sailors, would soon exhibit to them what Christianity is, not in sermons, but in real life ; not in ink, but in the hearts of those who bear its name. In a word, I am disposed to believe, and venture to hazard the conjecture, that miracles have ceased because the Church if faithful to her trust and to her Head, would propagate herself without them. And if not thus faithful, miracles would only force upon the world a mere mockery of the pure and holy religion of the Gospel ; and by assimilating heathen nations to nominal Christianity, would only increase their condemnation at the day of judgment. But even allowing that these nations would on the whole receive some present benefit, yet still it may be better for them that the time of their visitation should be postponed. Spiritual, like natural, water cannot rise above the source from which it flows. If then from the low level of the professing Church streams should issue forth which should convert the heathen, that foreign ground would be pre-occupied

by a forced and spurious growth. Whereas, by being still left fallow, it may at once receive a purer Christianity, destined in God's good time, to flow from a new order of things, and from a renovated Church at home.

There is nevertheless another aspect in which the discontinuance of miracles may be viewed. Allow that, as it respects our missions abroad, these attestations have been withheld on the grounds and for the reasons which have been already stated, yet it may be said, in reference to the Church at home, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Why should the righteous suffer with the wicked? Why should the unfaithfulness of some prevent God's faithful servants from being from time to time, refreshed and strengthened by the wonders of his stretched out arm?

In answer to such objections, I have no hesitation in saying, that to the truly pious and sincere, the withdrawal of miracles is a benefit and not a loss. These outward signs are calculated to interrupt and to disturb, rather than to accelerate, the process by which the elect of God are educating and preparing for "the glory that shall be revealed in them." The great instrument of their discipline and means of their personal salvation, is the necessity under which the present dispensation

places them of drawing nigh to God, and of exercising faith on God, not on the evidence which outward tokens give, but by a moral approximation and spiritual ascension. "Thus," says the Psalmist, "have I looked for thee in holiness, that I might behold thy power and glory." Our difficulties are, in this respect, our greatest blessings. The desire of our souls is that we may have clearer and clearer views of divine and eternal things; that the veil may be lifted up, that the clouds of unbelief may be dispersed, so that with the pure in heart we may see God. But with these God-ward tendencies, much of mere natural feeling often mingles; so that our "heart and our *flesh* crieth out for the living God." At such moments we would "seek a sign from heaven." We are disposed to say with Job, "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" This is all the instinctive longing of nature, for some *natural* approach to God. But "God hath provided some better thing for us." And here we cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom, and adore the goodness of God in that way into the holiest which He hath opened to us by the blood of Jesus. He knows that the soul can rest alone in Him. He has wrought into its first formation and primitive constitution an appetite for bliss which He alone

can satisfy. But He has in love and mercy so contrived and ordered things, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord—that there can be no approach to Him but by a moral and spiritual process, which assimilates us to the object whom we seek. Thus we are impelled by self-interest, and by the prime instincts of our rational nature, to purify ourselves as God is pure; in order that we may come in contact with His moral attributes and “see Him as He is.” There is indeed another kind of nearness unto God. By His ubiquity He is around us all, and in us all. The devils are spectators of his power. To the natural mind “the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy work.” But in his essential character as the Father of spirits, the centre and rest of souls, and the consoler of the heart, none can find or apprehend or know Him, but those who in all “their breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” “keep his statutes and observe his laws.” This is the great rule which our blessed Lord lays down in these important words: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to Him. John xiv. 21. “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him,

and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (v. 23.) This is the deep and radical principle which he elsewhere embodies in that gracious promise, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," &c. If we would then

. . . . "by due steps aspire,
To lay just hands upon that golden key,
That opes the palace of eternity ;"

if we would search, as for hid treasures, for that knowledge of which our Lord Himself declares that it is eternal life, our labour will be worse than vain, unless we make it our daily task to live in all outward and inward holiness. If we aim for so high a prize, we must endeavour "to hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." "We must abstain from all appearance of evil," and "hate even the garment spotted by the flesh." We must preserve the mind from pride, from malice, from impure desires, from anxious cares, from disturbing or depressing passions, so that we may become fit habitations of the Holy Spirit, and that in the bosom of the deep tranquillity which we feel, God may be sensible to the heart, and may whisper to the soul that that peace which passeth all understanding is but the overshadowing of His presence; and say, "Be still and know that I am, God." Such is the gracious plan by

which He who “died the just for the unjust,” brings a soul to its everlasting rest. Such is the contrivance of God’s love that He may make us partakers of His holiness, and sharers of His happiness. He invites us to Himself; He draws us with resistless cords; He imparts to the soul a thirst which His presence alone can satisfy; and He has moreover decreed, or rather bound up in the nature and constitution of things, the inseparable connexion between a right approach to Him, and the cultivation of every character and temper of the mind, which can secure our well-being, our perfection, and our happiness.

Now I do say that to such a process, the exhibition of miracles would be rather a hindrance than a help. Its obvious tendency would be to turn the mind off the *moral* track, into a path by which it would *naturally* ascend to God. But as there is no royal way to geometry, so to the true and saving knowledge of God, these displays of mere omnipotence can never lead. Miracles as evidences to souls who pant for the true fruition of God, are like lighted tapers to those who would vainly seek their aid in surveying the stars of heaven. These latter would by their artificial glare serve only to dazzle the eyes, and to obscure the objects which they were intended to display. And so it is with those who are athirst for God.

They cannot move in two diverging paths. Holiness points to God in one aspect, and miracles in another. The one leads to God as He is in Himself, and to the bosom of his essential nature; the other displays Him in his greatness, and in the firmament of his power. When the mind then has chosen the better part, and would pursue this moral union with God as the one thing needful; miracles can avail only to divert it from this unity of purpose, to distract its attention, and to tempt it to "climb up some other way." If it be not too familiar an illustration, I would say, that miracles would act on learners in the interior school of Christ, as translations of the classics do on boys in our public seminaries. Translations, palpably and at once, reveal the meaning of the author. And they are tempting, because they are short cuts to a knowledge, which otherwise must be come at, by patient and laborious study. They surmount the difficulties, but not in the right way. The boy has learned, and that superficially, the author, but not the *language*. He has been carried, and has not learned to walk. He may be prepared to stand an examination, but he has not been made a scholar. And thus it is with him who knows God, by attestations which mere outward signs can give. Knowledge so acquired is not that saving knowledge which is eternal life.

There may be conviction in this case, but it can be that of the natural mind alone. And such a conviction, I am persuaded, is in itself often not a benefit but a snare. For it tends to deceive a man upon the great point. He may rest in this mere natural faith, and mistake it for that which saves the soul. He may mistake an acquaintance with his lower attributes, for a true relationship to God himself; like those who in the last day will claim an intimacy with Him who knew them not, and "begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets."

In conclusion, I do believe, that the natural effect of miracles upon the mind of those who truly seek after God, would be rather to tempt it out of, than to accelerate it in, that path of holiness and assimilation to the Divine nature which alone can conduct to the fulness of joy and to pleasures at his right hand for evermore. To such as these then the cessation of signs and wonders can be no loss. Whether they ever will be revived; and whether, if Christianity were true to herself, she would be a gainer by their aid in the propagation of the Gospel in heathen lands, time, which revealeth all things, can alone determine.

ESSAY II.

ON VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE SPECTATORS OF OUR
CONDUCT.

PART I.

THERE is no passage of the kind, the justness and felicity of which has been more generally applauded than that of our great dramatic poet,

“ All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.”

This pregnant thought is capable of being expanded in various ways; and, amongst other trains of reflection, naturally suggests the following: There is nothing perhaps more wounding to the natural pride and native ambition of the mind than, to fancy at least, that we are unsuitably placed in life—that the part allotted us to act is below that rank which our talents and capabilities might fairly claim, and to which they might unpresumptuously aspire. It is no small trial to flesh and blood to see men of inferior attainments to ours, raised above us. We look up, perhaps from amidst the dark shades of obscurity and the drudgeries of a struggling life, or it may be from

the lowest depths of pining want and sorrow, and behold the favourites of fortune riding upon the high places of the earth, and basking in the sunshine of the world, envied, caressed, and flattered; while at the same time we feel that all intrinsic superiority is on our side. We know that this glitter is but the thin covering of a coarse and mean and narrow soul; while beneath the outward garb of poverty and depression, there breathes within our bosom a loftier spirit, forced as it were into an unnatural position, and struggling to escape into some more congenial element. This deep dissatisfaction of the mind is much enhanced, when we begin to reach that point, at which it appears that our present allotment is fixed for life, and that things must now continue as they are, to the end. In early youth we feel that we are still malleable, and that if Providence should raise us higher, we can easily take such new impressions as our change of circumstances may require. But when we are conscious of habits being so formed, that we are better suited to keep the blank we have drawn, than to ascend to the rank of those who hold the glittering prizes—that now it would be too late to acquire the modes, to become naturalized to the manners of those in higher station, so as to act our part with ease and grace, if elevated to their level; there is,

under these convictions, depression of spirit and rebellion of soul, best known to those who would have things otherwise than God has ordered, and who oppose their will to the march of an almighty Providence: for experience alone can tell how this thorough discontent can fester in the heart, and rankle in the breast which harbours it.

A truly pious friend, placed in both trying and humiliating circumstances, once told me that the burden was once considerably lightened by the hope of better things to come, even here below. While comparatively young, and while paths of deliverance seemed not wholly closed, he felt the justice of that saying, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity:" but when he began to have too good grounds for thinking that his present trials would terminate only with his life, and that those crosses, which to flesh and blood were humbling even to the dust, he would have to carry to the borders of the grave: when nature was deprived of every temporal and congenial hope, and when no apparent door of extrication opened, save that gate which leads to the world of spirits; my friend told me that when this conviction flashed upon his mind, it almost upset his reason. However in his case, man's extremity was God's opportunity. It drove him to a throne of grace: it forced him to cut the last cable

which bound his affections to the world: it weaned his heart from earth, and was the instrument of rendering him, what he was at the time of this disclosure—one of the best and happiest of men.

It is true that for misery and sin, and for pride, the main ingredient of both, there is an unfailing cure—there is a balm in Gilead, and a Physician there. The good Samaritan is at hand, and ever ready to apply his mollient medicines to the wounded heart, to still the throbbings of the breast, and to give peace where there was no peace. All these murmurings against a wise and gracious Providence are hushed to rest when we learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart—when we take up his cross and press it to our bosom—when we die with him to the vanities of time, and open our eyes upon the dawning glories of eternity. Entering thus into the true sanctuary of God, we are taught lessons there, which “were too hard for us before.” We no longer “fret ourselves because of the ungodly, neither are we envious against the evil doers;” for “then understand we the end of these men, namely, how God does set them in slippery places, and casteth them down, and destroyeth them.” There also we learn that through a vale of tears, and by rugged roads and paths of sorrow, the heirs of immortality

pass onwards to their joyful resurrection, to live beneath the cloudless skies of a new heaven, and to taste the pure felicities of that land which God has prepared for them that love him.

The grand specific for pride is thus to look with realizing faith upon an invisible and crucified Redeemer. Nevertheless our weaknesses require every possible variety of aid ; and truths unheeded before, will often act with influence upon the mind, merely by being thrown into some new attitude, or by being clothed with some new dress. Thus, that lesson which it is the great object of both Providence and Scripture in all their length and breadth to teach, namely, the utter vanity of temporal things, may possibly impress itself upon minds untaught till now ; when cast in the mould of these simple words—"All the world's a stage." This lively thought, if duly apprehended, would clear off many a cloud which overhangs the soul—suspicions that, because we are low in life, we stand low in the estimate of heaven—doubts (for such there are, though rather misgivings of the heart than reasonings of the mind,) that what we are here, in comparative circumstances, we shall be hereafter.

But let us trace this fine analogy. Each actor on the theatric boards, performs his part before a double class of witnesses—the one his fellow-

players composing the *dramatis personæ*, the other the audience assembled in the house. But how different is the comparative rank of the *rôle* assigned to him, *as it is supposed* to appear to the company who live and move upon the stage, or *as it does* appear to the multitude of mere spectators! In the former instance, he who comes forth in royal robes, or is called by some high sounding titles, is (I speak not now of moral worth) the great man, surrounded with all the magic and splendour of exalted station. On the other hand, the real hero of the piece—the offspring of the loftiest conceptions of the poet—is often, in this mimic world, placed in humble life—remarkable, perhaps, only for the crimes with which he is unjustly charged, or for the wrongs and injuries which are heaped on his defenceless head. But all this is entirely reversed in the judgment and estimate of the audience. To them the king, or prince, or duke, is a mere cipher, a peg on which to hang the history and fortunes of the man he scorns and tramples under foot. Such, it should be added, (and here lies the main point of the analogy,) such is the comparative view of the manager, who assigns to the performers their several parts. He who acts the king is often the very lowest of the company, selected only because some glittering robe or

spangled coat may happen to fit his person ; while to some eminent performer it falls to personate the suffering and the oppressed—the man who bears with magnanimity,

“ The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

Thus it is upon the stage of actual life.

ESSAY II.

PART II.

OFTEN may God's first-rate actor say, in the language of the prophet, “ Thou hast made me the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.” In the view of his fellow-actors he is not unfrequently an object of contempt and scorn. He is sometimes low in station, depressed by poverty, beneath the attention or observance of the children of prosperity.

“ The self-approving haughty world
Scarce deigns to notice him ; or, if she see,
Deems him a cipher in the works of God.”

Such does the heir of glory, such does the great agent in the schemes of Providence often seem to those who strut above him upon the high places of the earth. Such did Moses appear to the king of Egypt when he said, “ Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their

works? Get you unto your burdens." Such were the apostles in the eyes of their oppressors, when, bleeding with stripes, they stood before the face of the proud Sanhedrim; or departed from the face of the council, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus." Such was their blessed Master in the estimate of this apostate world, when the deep-toned language of his own depression, was but the echo of that scorn and contumely which compassed him on every side. "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted and thou didst deliver them: they cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." But how did these champions of heaven appear in the view of that grand audience—that august assembly—those invisible spectators before whom the actors upon this earth perform their several parts? What applauses did they not win from the cloud of witnesses that encompass us—from the innumerable company of angels who "look into" our concerns—from the ever-present and all-seeing God

in whom we live and move, and have our being? What, in their estimate, were the meekness, the patience, the long-suffering which it was Moses's part to exercise, and which filled perhaps the infatuated breast of Pharaoh with a momentary sense of triumph? They saw in them the true constituents of intrinsic greatness—the elements of that moral power which fitted him as a mighty agent in the hands of Providence. His short-lived "afflictions with the people of God" were, in their view, but the rugged steps by which alone he could ascend to the recompense of the reward. Again, how was it with those apostles who "were made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men?" To mere eyes of flesh they were "as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things." Nevertheless, what was the verdict of that invisible assembly before whom they performed their daily miracles of patience—when being reviled, they blessed; being persecuted they suffered it; being defamed they entreated?" Were these triumphs over all that is selfish in man's nature, their taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, their rejoicing in sorrow and glorying in tribulations—was all this to act a second-rate part upon the stage of life, or to sustain a subordinate character before those high intelligences who sit in heavenly places and fill the amphi-

theatre above? No: their estimate was but a loud amen to that voice which said—"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

But if we would see, in full contrast, how differently the same things seem to earthly and heavenly witnesses, we must look to the cross of Christ. Spat upon, scourged, and buffeted—numbered with the transgressors, and placed between two public malefactors—disowned by his acquaintances, and deserted by his friends—blackened with every stain which can degrade the character, and accused of every crime which can render a man contemptible or hateful—convicted by the solemn sentence of the law, of blasphemy against God, and that sentence re-echoed by the voice of a whole people; it was in that last stage of human misery, and lowest depth of degradation, that he "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly;" out in the open daylight of eternity—before angels and arch-angels and all the company of heaven—triumphing over the legions of hell and the hosts of darkness in the death of the Cross. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted

with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; he was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth." Such was the earthly portrait of Him who to heavenly spectators was the brightness of his Father's glory—the express image of his person. Thus was the incarnate Redeemer "a cloud and darkness to them, but a pillar of fire to these." Nay, in exact proportion as He was humbled in human calculation, did he rise in the scale of heaven; cherubim and seraphim learning new songs of adoration from the cross: nay, the love of his eternal Father burning towards him with still intenser fire, "because He laid down his life that He might take it again."

If, then, we all perform our parts before two classes of spectators—the one whose approval or disapproval is in unison with the mind of God, and must stamp our destinies for ever; the other whose censure or applause "is even a vapour that appeareth for a short time and then vanisheth away"—of what incalculable importance is it to our highest interests, that, comparatively regard-

less of what our fellow-mortals think or say, we keep a constant eye to the glorious assembly who surround the stage—to the brilliant company who look down upon the chequered scenes of human action! Nay, how essential is it to our present happiness, to pierce the clouds which hem us in; to dissipate the delusions which make us, in spite of all our theories, feel that nothing exists but what we see—nothing lives but what wears the livery of flesh and blood—and to believe with realizing conviction and waking certainty that this world is not our all—that we shall soon be let out upon a wider plain, and breathe a freer air; nay, that we are now inhabitants of a more extended sphere—that boundless space and universal nature are all around us—that there is a church above “bound in the bundle of life” with the Church below—that angels are at every moment ascending and descending by that mystical ladder whose bottom is resting upon the earth, and whose top is leaning against the battlements of heaven. How essential, I say, to our present happiness is it, to burst this bubble that encircles us, and to let the day star dawn, and the reality of things appear! “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” It is the introduction of the soul to scenes like these, which delivers it from the solitude, or worse than soli-

tude, of this dim spot which men call earth. Once admitted to this fellowship, and we shall never want an audience before whom to act our part. Nay, let our lot be rather to suffer than to act; let banishment from all we love, and all that interests us, be our portion; let the psalmist's complaint be ours—"My lovers and friends hast thou put away from me, and hid mine acquaintance out of my sight;" let our experience amply testify of the world, as it assuredly will do if we want her aid, that the wretched she forsakes, and "swift on her downy pinions flies from woe;" let us be "made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights be appointed to us;" let lingering pains and pining sickness, and withering old age, chain us to our deserted couch; let nature whisper to us that we are "clean forgotten, as a dead man out of mind"—that we are "become like a broken vessel"—that we are cumberers of the ground, burdens to our friends, salt that hath lost its savour, good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men; in this lowest depth of gloom and of fancied solitude, let faith uplift her glass from earth to heaven, and what living pictures, what brilliant exhibitions burst upon the view! We exclaim at once with Jacob—"This is God's host." Like the same patriarch, we awake, as it were, out of sleep, and say—

“ Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not ; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

We are not made for solitude. It is part of our original constitution, and bound up in the very essence of our being, to desire the notice, to value the approval, and to thirst for the applause of some witness or witnesses of our conduct. And though this great moral instinct tends supremely unto God, it does not point exclusively to that one glorious object. In this, as well as in other respects, there are propensities in man which prove that, while his full felicity can be found in God alone, he is formed to experience a sweet complacency in the interchanges of a more equal love—in cherishing and being cherished, in valuing and being valued, by those who were made by the same hand that he was—who are the product of the same mind as he is—who are children of the same Father as he is—who reflect back the image of the same great Archetype that he does—and of whom God pronounces, as He did of us in our primeval innocence, that they are “ very good.” But we are not left to our own imaginings upon this point. The whole principle is involved in those words spoken, be it observed, when man walked with his Creator, in amity and filial confidence, amidst the flowers of paradise : the Lord God

said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Hence we see how deeply seated in our nature is the desire of companionship, and dread of solitary existence. Hence the anxiety that we should attract attention, and play our parts before spectators who observe our conduct. Hence the consolation to those whom man despises, of knowing and feeling that they "have greater witness than that of" beings who see with mortal eyes. Hence the life giving energy of that faith which, when the sun of this world goes down, cheers the night, and illuminates the arch above with other suns, and draws out upon the plains of heaven, stars as the sand on the sea shore innumerable. Hence, in a word, the blessedness of realizing to ourselves those glorious prospects which the apostle thus opens to the believing soul—"Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God—the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

ESSAY IV.

ON THE PAST MISCARRIAGES OF YOUTH.

To those who have, alas ! like too many, thrown away the golden prime of life, who have wasted their youth in folly, if not in riotous living, and yet afterwards been converted to the love of God, and purity, and goodness ; there is no subject to which the mind is led to turn with a deeper and more melancholy interest, than to what they remember of themselves in early days. They contrast what they were with what they might have been. That holiness which they late have learned to prize, appears to them now in perfect beauty when they see it exhibited in some promising and happy youth, who walks with alacrity and cheerful steps in the paths of wisdom. Life thus seen in all its freshness—its sun just rising, its flowers just opening, its prospects bright for both worlds, for time and for eternity—surely the primeval paradise can scarce present to the imagination a picture of more vivid colouring, or calm repose, than does such an early display of youthful piety. Sometimes these rare instances of early goodness will appear in immediate contrast, with those of far

different character. Such as do their part, at least, to bring back those days of old, when “the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence,” such as contribute their mite to hasten the perilous times when “men shall be lovers of themselves, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, incontinent, fierce, despisers of them that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” Doubtless, if heaven and hell were “naked and open to our view, they could scarcely exhibit more wide extremes than these two classes of the rising population; the energy and vigour belonging to that prime season of life only rendering the one more lovely, and the vice of the other more odious and deformed.

When “old things are passed away, and all things are become new,” and when years, perhaps, have rendered habits of piety and purity a second nature, men are prone to forget what they once have been. But moments of a humiliating remembrance will recur, and scarce at any time with keener edge than when some revolting picture of youthful folly displays itself in rank luxuriance. The thought will suddenly arise—“And is this exhibition so abhorrent to my feelings, the image of what I was myself? Was I once that vain and vaunting creature, thus selling myself for nought,

and glorying in my shame ?” But there is, perhaps, a still more painful process by which the humbling sense of what he was, is forced upon the repentant sinner’s mind. It is when some such amiable and attractive specimen of early goodness, as I have mentioned, is presented to his view—some Samuel, ministering before the Lord, some follower of Him who grew in wisdom as in stature, some youthful champion of the cross, some strippling David who has fought the good fight and overcome the wicked one. Such a spectator and such a spectacle have some ingredients, (though God be praised, far different in other features,) some shades, at least, of resemblance to that scene which our great poet thus draws with matchless hand :

“ So spake the cherub ; and his grave rebuke,
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
Invincible ; abashed the devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue in her shape, how lovely ; saw, and pined
His loss.”

It by no means requires that a man should have been profligate or abandoned in his youth, to feel thus humbled by such contrasts with his former self. If he have wasted his early years in indolence, or in frivolous pursuits ; it is enough to

make him keenly sensible of his disgraceful folly. But then, what is to be done? Mere regrets are vain. Our sighs and repinings cannot bring back the past, or restore the golden hours now numbered with the years beyond the flood. And let us take care that, in these reviews, there be no wrong admixture—no sorrow of this world which worketh death. The language of the heart should be, “Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” If what we mainly deplore be our temporal disadvantages, our loss of standing in society, and our inferior position to those who, by virtuous industry, passed us on the road of life—why, what is this but to say, “I have sinned against God, and I have injured my worldly prospects; but the former I count as a mere nothing in comparison with the latter?” Oh! let none delude themselves by thinking that sorrow for the mere temporal consequences of sin is sorrow for sin itself. Let none imagine that God will esteem the tears which flow on their account as tears of penitence. No; such lamentation over a mispent youth, is but early indifference to God, reacted under a new form—is but building present sins on the foundation of the past. But is there no balm in Gilead—is there no refuge for the heart—is there no return from that country into which our youthful steps have strayed? Yes;

blessed be God, "His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts." Ungrateful as we have been—ungracious as it is, in all human estimate, to fly, in our distress, to Him whom, in our prosperity, we have injured and disowned—yet God is willing to receive us, miserable sinners, on these terms—if, after we have given our prime, our bloom, our youth, our beauty, to other lovers, and to other lords—if, after the glory is departed from us, and the spring and summer-time of life is gone—if, even then, we fly to Him, who gave us all the blessings we abused, when we have nothing else to fly to, He will receive us—He will take us to the bosom of his mercy—He will wipe away our tears—He will cause all his goodness to pass before us—He will shine forth as the bright original of that copy which He himself has drawn. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

Still, however deeply convinced that forgiveness upon the part of God is wholly irrespective of his own deserving; and that of the ten thousand talents he owes, he has nothing to pay—nevertheless, he that loves God cannot but deplore, in bitterness of spirit, that his best days were days of wilful banishment from his father's house. The treasures which he has thrown away,

will haunt him in waking dreams, or in visions of the night. What youth might have been to him, will paint its images on the fancy ; and though all regret for losing what he never could have lost, namely, a righteousness which could justify him before God, be far from his thoughts, and foreign from every sentiment which fills his bosom, the heart will sometimes whisper to itself—"Oh, if I could now start afresh upon the road of life, if some magic hand could roll back the years, and place me once again under the cloudless sky, amidst the verdant scenes, and upon the sunny fields of youth, with what joy would I devote that youth in all its bloom and freshness unto God !"

Nor would I altogether condemn such an occasional indulgence of the feelings, provided those feelings be not the mere froth of a sentimental mind, but the genuine movement of a faithful heart. But if we have ourselves such yearnings of the soul, how shall we put them to the test ? How shall we know what manner of spirit they are of ? How shall we ascertain whether, if we *had* our youth again, we should dedicate and devote it to the service of our God ? In answer to this, let me then, in conclusion, suggest a thought full of bright elements to the mind which apprehends its meaning, and takes it in ; a thought, which gives us the best means the case admits of, of proving

how we *would* act if youth returned; nay, a thought which, in a certain measure and degree, restores to us that youth again. It restores it to us, not literally, need I say? but, in representation as true as the most faithful miniature to the man, or rather by an indentification not less intimate than that of the lesser to the greater statue, if hewn from the same rock and chiselled by the same hand.

The whole constitution of nature is a volume of instruction; and as we travel on the road of life, we see lessons of wisdom, and monitors of our duty on every side. There is a correspondence of things one to another, so that the lesser constituents of the great machine are but miniatures of the greater; and we see in each motion at the centre of the wheel, the sweep of the vast circumference, diminished to a size perceptible to our senses. Thus, the diurnal motion of the earth, brings with it changes and successions precisely answering to those of its yearly revolution, and thus, also, each day, is life on a smaller scale. It has its infancy, its youth, its manhood, its decline. Nor is this correspondence fitted only to amuse the fancy. It is capable of being turned to the most valuable account. If we use it rightly, it is a kind provision and merciful arrangement, and gives us constantly recurring opportunities of

making, in one sense, the very reparation which the heart desires, for the follies and miscarriages of life. We might trace the analogy throughout, and show how the day is an exact abbreviation of life; we might compare its dawn to infancy, its increasing sunshine to youth, its meridian blaze to full maturity, its evening to a good old age, the stillness and darkness of the night to death. But, for our present purpose, let us contemplate the morning as the picture in miniature, nay, the diurnal counterpart, of that youth which, vain as the thought is, we would fondly desire to recall, and yield as a willing sacrifice unto God. Well then—let us say to ourselves as we wake from the slumbers of the night—“As youth is to life, so is this hour of prime to the opening day. It is the image, the representative, it is the recurrence and re-appearance, upon a lesser scale, of that object the thoughts of which I so cherish in my heart. Upon this narrow stage, I will act the part which I now know and feel I ought to have acted, amidst the wider scenes of life; I will now prepare my mind, regulate my affections, form my character, and under God, fix my destiny for the day; I will give my thoughts to God; I will watch against the intrusion of vain imaginations, and the first assaults of sin; I will keep my heart with all diligence; I will open it to the early dew,

which now descends from heaven; I will improve the grace, and keep the peace, which now, "so fresh, so calm, so pure," visits my bosom, and revives my spirit; I will preserve this tranquillity: I will carry forward, into the field of active duty, the blessed influences of the morning's meditations, and the morning's prayer; and they will bear me through the heat and burden, the dangers and the distractions of the day." Let these be our first thoughts on waking. Let us act on these thoughts, and put these resolutions into practice, and we shall turn our regrets for mispent youth to good account, and transmute our sorrow into joy. We shall prove to God and to ourselves, that *were* life to begin again, we *should* devote it, from its earliest dawn, to Him. But we shall do more than this. We shall assure our hearts—we shall manifest to Him who is greater than our hearts, that, with all our short-comings, infirmities, and sins, nevertheless, that incorruptible seed abideth in us; that true fidelity, that loyalty of spirit is ours, which when this earth, and all that it inherits have passed away; when the sun and moon, and stars have waxed old and lost their brightness, shall flourish in immortal prime and changeless beauty; shall be for ever setting out afresh to run its immortal race, and ascend higher and higher in its upward endless flight, "young and lusty as an eagle."

ESSAY V.

HOW TO SPEND A DAY.

THE question, to what heights of holiness Christianity can raise us in this present life, never can, I believe, be satisfactorily determined. And among others, for this plain reason, that religion is a thing of infinite degree. No man ever reached such an eminence, that he could ascend no higher. The divine life is a continual progress. And though *we* must judge of persons by those palpable and glaring marks which separate them into classes, yet, to the mind which sees things as they are, it may be that no two individuals appear exactly of equal spiritual stature. The soul of man was formed for God—and, as such, its capacities are fitted to aspire after a boundless object. If, then, we could prescribe the limits of that perfection to which we would attain, such a knowledge might insensibly damp our zeal, and check the ardour of our pursuits. However exalted the object, it would not be infinite, because defined. And thus it would want that characteristic which alone can draw forth all the energies of the immortal mind. Our ignorance, then, as to what may be, even in this life, is but—

“ A blindness to the future kindly given,
That each may fill the circle marked by heaven.”

Our healthiest position for the present may be, without theorizing upon the subject, to strive for a degree of holiness here, which we shall, nevertheless, not attain to till mortality is swallowed up of life. But, however this may be, I am sure that religion is not so much a science, as a life ; that it is better to press forward for the prize, than to stand disputing about it ; to make perfection, as far as we are able, a matter of practice, and not of barren speculation. In this wise and laudable pursuit, let us remember that life is broken into smaller sections ; and that with these, as they come measured out to us, we have to do. It is our concern, and our privilege too, to take these portions one by one. I say our privilege, because nothing can be more favourable to us. Nothing can be more friendly to our spiritual interests, than having to deal with life, not as a whole, which we must subdivide, as we can ourselves, but as already parcelled out in manageable proportions. This is an unspeakably gracious condescension to our weakness, a most considerate provision for our good. Let us, then avail ourselves of it. And if we would aim at the highest point attainable by man, let us endeavour to ascend step by step. Let us endeavour to grapple with the duties im-

mediately in hand. Let us try how holily and unblameably the present hour, and the present miniature of life may be passed. Let us feel that, sufficient unto the day are the responsibilities thereof.

One great advantage of thus fencing off smaller portions of the wide field of life, is, that it brings out into comparative relief those lesser movements, which, as parts of a great whole, would scarcely be observed. In proportion as we limit our horizon, each particular object will press itself on our attention, and attract our notice. Thus, the same action, the same failure in duty, the same victory over temptation, will, in the review of a single day, appear of a very different magnitude from what it would in the retrospect of a year. I have, in a former essay, endeavoured to show how each day is a miniature of life—and how especially the morning resembles youth, in its important bearings upon hours to come. I shall not, therefore, suffer myself to be drawn again into this pleasing train of reflection. I shall rather turn aside into another path which this fertile subject opens, and compare the early opening of the morning to the sabbath of the day. It has been the observation and the experience of many pious souls, that as they have passed the Sunday, so the week has generally turned out ;

and that if, during the former, they drew nigh unto God, he would draw nigh unto them amidst the labours and trials of the latter. This would be a cheering and animating thought, to begin the day with. When we awake, then, let us recall it to our minds. Let us say: "Now this sweet hour of prime is the sabbath of the coming day. Upon this hour I will let no earthly care encroach. I claim it for God, for the refreshment of my soul, for my preparation against the intrusions and perturbations of the world. On the stock I now lay in, on the spiritual strength I now attain, on the peace I now establish in my soul, on the prayers which now ascend to heaven, it may depend whether this day is to be a day of trouble, of failure, and of distraction, or a day of outward and inward composure, tranquillity, and sunshine." Thus commencing in the divine strength, and setting out with God, it may be well, in surveying the field before us, to subdivide the day itself, and to fix on some point at which it will be desirable to make our first stop. There let us pause, and measure back the ground we have gone over, and ask of conscience how its reckoning stands. Let the commencing stage which we thus mark out, be—from the morning devotion till our meeting the several members of our family at the breakfast table. Dear and intimate as are the ties which

bind us to these, still there is a sense in which *they* are the world to us. Converse even with them, and contact with the variety of tempers and dispositions which the domestic circle may present, differ widely and essentially from the solitude of the closet; from that retreat, where the whole field is occupied by our own hearts, and that God who seeth in secret. Even in the midst of home, there is a more interior home in each man's bosom; and out of that shelter and sanctuary we must, as it were, come forth to join the society of our best loved relatives and friends. When, then, these first greetings, together with the family devotions, and the morning repast, are over—let us, if, on examination, all is right, “thank God and take courage.” And let us next proceed to fix our eye upon some second landmark now before us, upon the journey of the day—that, when we come up to it, we may again call our conscience to account; that we may try our hearts, and see how far the peace of God has kept them tranquil, and in possession of the one thing needful; that we may ascertain whether we have been able to preserve the flame of the spiritual sacrifice alive, or whether, like some feeble taper, which we vainly attempt to carry lighting through the storm, it has been blown out, and left the soul in darkness. Well, then, let the next stage or

place of stopping be fixed for that time, when the day, as a scene of active business, begins to decline. This matter must, of course, depend on the nature of our habits. With some, it would of course imply that cheerful hour, when again we see the olive branches around our table. With others, there may be a long interval between the conclusion of, what I would call, the heat and burthen of the day, and the reassembling of our friends and family at the social board. But, however this may be, let some hour about the beginning of the day's decline, be fixed for a second review, how the matter of our salvation stands. Let us inquire how far we have passed the dangers of that portion of the daily voyage—and if on this examination, we find that the ship has stemmed the waves, and received no hurt nor damage—if conscience can report itself void of offence towards God, and towards man, we have had assuredly no small deliverance. Nay, if we could see the whole of things, we should perceive that an escape were utterly impossible, but for the omnipotent hand which steered the vessel.

And here I would say, after long observation, that in the generality of cases, by far the most trying period of the day lies between the two and marks which I have pointed out. Soon after the hour of breakfast, the world rushes in, in full

torrent. Calls of business begin to urge their several claims ; and before one affair is settled, another imperiously demands attention. This is the time of day for which we chiefly make appointments : and almost mechanically answer to the question, "What time shall I call?" "Call after breakfast." Thus, an accumulation of the most incongruous materials collects, and bustle seems to come to a focus at the very moment when, I do believe, if there is any delicacy of constitution, there is most need of freedom, air, and exercise. Often when we are grappling with some knotty and complicated affair, the door opens, and the heart sickens when we are told that such or such a person waits upon us according to some appointments which we had totally forgotten. And then another and another demand is made upon our overburdened attention, each urging a claim for preference ; one reminding us of our promise that there should be no delay ; another emphatically proclaiming that his business must be despatched "now or never."

It appears almost ludicrous to enter into such familiar details ; but these are the realities of life. This is the battle we have to fight ; and here is "the patience and the faith of the saints." These things are so low and earthly, that one feels it almost degrading to one's pen to notice them. But

the fact is, the more low and earthly they are, the more does it require of sovereign grace to live amidst them, and to keep the heart above them. As it would be trying to a prince to preserve his equanimity amongst the rudeness of the basest of mankind, so it is hard for a being of celestial origin, a spirit created in the image of God, to keep itself pure and peaceable, amidst the foul contacts, the petty interests, the "low-thoughted cares," the jarrings and collisions of this disordered world. It is the unsuitableness of the one to the other—it is the wide interval between man's immortal mind, and the base associations of his mortal body, which constitutes the very essence of his state of trial. Whoever, then, arrives at that period of the day at which I recommend a second solemn pause, and can felicitate himself on having passed the ordeal just now described, without wound to his conscience or damage to his peace, has indeed abundant cause for gratitude to God. He has attained a great victory, a victory the magnitude of which we cannot fully comprehend on this side the grave. He has fought with visible and invisible enemies, and has prevailed. He has wrestled, not only "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," and has triumphed in the name of his God.

Now, the great warfare of the day is accomplished—its up-hill work is over ; and if we still keep upon our guard, in watchfulness and prayer, we have only a gentle descent to bring us to its close. I speak, of course, of those who do not volunteer for unnecessary dangers;—who do not, by entering into the dissipations and vain amusements of the world, reserve the hardest conflict for the last. There remains no further point to fix on for self-examination and retrospection of the past, but that which the spiritual wrestler welcomes, as the call to rest. I have, in the commencement of these remarks, observed that, to define exactly to what height of holiness it is possible to ascend in this life, is a “knowledge too wonderful and excellent for us.” Perhaps the nearest approach which we could make to accuracy upon this point, would be the following : Let our days be so passed, that we may be able, at the termination of each, to look back upon it with pleasure, and not with pain.

I speak not here as if conscience could, upon any review, bring in such a verdict as to release us from the obligation (or, should I not rather say, to deprive us of the comfort?) of the publican’s prayer, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Our brightest days, our happiest hours, our purest aspirations after heaven, our holiest com-

munings with the Father of our spirits—even these require to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus—these claim their share of the pardon which that blood procured. No! I speak not of a perfection never to be attained in this life by a son of fallen Adam. But still “this,” says the apostle, “is the will of God—even your sanctification.” Nor should any Christian be satisfied to live below his privileges—to aim under the mark of the prize of his high calling. Well, then, what is the utmost point to which he can aspire? What is the highest degree of perfection to which man, clothed in flesh and blood, can rise? My answer is but to repeat, that the liveliest picture which my imagination can draw of a holy, or, in other words, a happy man, is this: he is one who keeps the peace of the morning throughout the day—whose mind is not dislodged from the first position that it takes; nor scattered from the centre in which it sought and found repose, when it offered its earliest sacrifice to God. Who, amidst the calls and varieties of the active day, does not lose sight of, or part company with, those objects which engaged his mind and filled his heart, when, upon his first awakening, he felt himself alone with God; who can see his morning star still going before him as he runs his daily stage of duties, and mingling her light with the

calm evening star which guides him to his rest. Such a man, I say, seems to me to have found the pearl of great price, and to have reached a peaceful eminence above the storms and tempests of the world. He sets the Lord always before him. He enjoys inward tranquillity, and lives in the sunshine of his own breast. He possesses the secret of ceaseless prayer. Such a man has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

ESSAY VI.

ON EARLY RISING.

THE importance of early rising to health of body and health of soul, to carrying on the business of this world, and of our preparation for the next, is so universally acknowledged, that it would be loss of words to reiterate all the well-known arguments upon the subject. The theory is undisputed, whatever failure there may be in the practice. I have in two former essays, represented how the morning is to the day what youth is to our after age, and what the Sabbath is to the residue of the week. I have thrown out these thoughts that those who read them may be induced to keep the morning no less than the heart with all diligence, because that out of it are the issues of life. And

certainly no man can give a good account of his mornings unto God, or expect them to be the precursors of cheerful, useful, happy days, who wastes them upon a bed of sloth. Still many from whom one might expect better things, are slaves to this indulgence. They reluctantly acknowledge the importance of the duty, they resolve upon its performance, but when they wake there is something so comfortless in parting from their warm bed—there is something so revolting, so overpowering in the idea of suddenly exchanging their snug nest for the wide and open field, the broad glare, the fresh and pitiless breezes of the waking active day, that the sluggard shrinks from the encounter as from a minor act of self-destruction, as a summons to cast his former self away and launch forth another creature.

Indeed, in this view I might have added to my two former resemblances of the morning, that our first awaking may and ought to remind us of our resurrection from the grave. And surely this cannot but wound the conscience with keen reproach, if we refuse to rise at the call of duty, and leave our beds only when we are weary of being in them.

Still, where no attempt is made to gainsay the duty or the benefit of early hours, it is astonishing how fertile the mind is, when the unwelcome

call arrives, in excuses for some indulgence. There is an artful, cunning effort to deceive ourselves which those alone who grapple with the trial and resist the temptation, know. When the dreaded hour is come, one hacknied apology for continuing in bed is this—"I have not slept well, and must now endeavour to make up for lost time." Now in general this having slept ill is a mere fancy. But, supposing it to be true, it is in itself an additional reason for early rising. Long experience convinces me, that we never find more benefit from this practice, than when the night has been restless and disturbed. But besides, it is highly probable that the lack of sleep proceeded from our lying too late on the previous morning; and if we think so much of what we fancy to be a bad night, let us not, if we can avoid it, repeat the dose, which our present indulgence will almost infallibly secure for the *succeeding* night.

Another excuse which a man half asleep and half awake is apt to make, is, that he has a fatiguing day before him, and will fortify himself by a little additional repose. Now, in all probability, this, like the bad night, is only a convenient fancy. But even if it were true, the best preparation for a day of more than ordinary labour is to rise betimes; for in the first place it invigorates the faculties and braces the energies of the mind;

secondly, it gives more time for the dispatch of business ; above all, it affords us free space and opportunity to pray for a blessing upon our endeavours.

But the imagination is never more prolific than in hitting on some expedient, when it has a favourite wish to gratify. It is almost exhaustless in discovering reasons for doing what we are resolved to do, or for parrying the claim of duties which we are determined not to perform. Those who "are not ignorant of his devices," know to what wretched shifts the great deceiver will drive the mind, that it may impose upon itself in the case before us. And there is no apology more ready or convenient for continuing in bed when we ought to be up, than that we are not quite well, and that it would not be right or prudent to run the risk of rising. To bear ourselves out in this, the whole body is rapidly reviewed, and the frame is ransacked, to find out some little matter which may be amiss (at the same time that the keen appetite for sleep and the thorough enjoyment of one's bed, might argue the absence of much physical derangement). Some trifling hoarseness, or affection of the throat or chest, some threatening of a cold, some embryo cough, which "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," might take in time

and check before it gains a head—something of this kind it does not tax the imagination hard to picture ; and then the moral obligation lies all the other way, duty and pleasure concur, and even the conscience can be brought in to say, that it would be decidedly wrong to trifle with our health. In answer to all this, I affirm from my own experience, and on the testimony of others, that there is no better cure for trifling ailments, for little disarrangements, for numberless uncomfortable feelings, and interruptions of perfect health to which sensitive constitutions are always liable, than the bracing of the morning air, than the cold bath of early rising. One who had long tried this admirable practice, told me that with him it had often been a cure for those very colds, for which lying in bed is so commonly recommended.

But after all, I believe the most prevalent argument for wasting time, and energies, and health in bed, is that the forcing of ourselves out of it is so violently opposed to the inclinations of flesh and blood. To hear a knock at the door, and five or six o'clock announced, is a shock to our sensual nature greater than they who feel it most are willing to allow. Those who are the most thorough slaves to this indulgence, speak of it as a subject which it would be ridiculous to treat with gravity. But it is far from being that trivial

matter. The duty is one of great importance, and the temptations to its non-performance, formidable indeed. It is always an unwise thing to underrate the strength of an adversary; and those who think little of the opposition which nature makes to the practice I am recommending, show thereby that they have not tried its power, nor grappled with its force. I would, therefore, exhort all those who fear God, and still are defaulters in this particular, no longer to defer their amendment. I would warn them that upon unfaithfulness in this particular the most serious consequences may depend. I would beseech them to treat this temptation as a formidable foe, as one not to be resisted by lesser motives, but to be encountered with the weightiest arguments which religion can supply.

In the first place, let the following consideration be put to try its strength. When one is balancing between principle and sensuality upon wakening in the morning, let conscience say—“If I admit it to be my duty now to rise, is it not a very serious thing to begin the day with a sin, and to present an act of positive disobedience as the first fruits of the morning unto God? What blessing can I reasonably expect throughout the day, if I rise from my bed with a sense of fresh guilt upon my soul, with an uneasy and accusing

conscience?" Secondly, if sloth would plead for some indulgence, call to mind your Saviour's self-abnegation, watchings, sufferings, and pains. Allow that you are not called to bear all the burdens, which systems more rigorous than true have been wont to lay upon men's shoulders; allow that your Saviour sowed in tears that you might reap in joy; allow that He has purchased by his agonies and death, not the inheritance of eternal life alone, but all the pure and innocent pleasures which earth can afford you on your way to heaven; allow all this; still, with every such allowance, you cannot obliterate from that cross on which all your hopes are fixed, the superscription which the finger of God has written, that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Well, remember this upon your bed, call it to mind when you are just awaking, and thus commune with yourself—"What—shall I wallow in sensuality and sloth, when all that is pure and bright in nature, all that is cheering and attractive in religion, invite me to delight myself in God, and to offer the morning sacrifice of thanksgiving, prayer and praise? shall I glut myself with this sinful indulgence when, to save me from all sin, my Saviour spent his nights in watching, his days in labour, and his last breath amidst the agonies of the cross?

I am convinced that a conscientious man can possess himself of no better antidote to the morning's sloth than to call to mind his past offences. "Another day has dawned," let him say. "I am summoned to set out upon a new stage of my mortal journey; and why should I linger thus? 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' Is it duty that detains me here, or is it not rather sensuality opposed to duty? Is it not self-indulgence which binds me with these chains? Yes; it is because it is unpleasant, because it mortifies this corrupt flesh, that I refuse this call of conscience. And shall that be my reason? After all my sins, shall I forfeit the benefits and blessings of early rising, that I may pamper this gross body, and that my sinful nature may take its ease, and find its pleasure?" I am persuaded that this thought, if vividly impressed, would serve better than all the alarm-clocks that ever were invented, to arouse us from a bed of sloth. It turns the prevailing argument for continuing there the other way, and throws the mere unpleasantness of the thing into the opposite scale. Whatever delusive motives there may be for indulgence, such as fancied illness, a sleepless night just passed, or a busy day to come, at all events one standing argument for springing from our beds will be, that it mortifies the flesh. And the more it pleads for indulgence,

the stronger the argument will grow. In that importunity of the flesh, we shall recognise the foe which has so often perilled our salvation. This will stimulate us to exertion—it will cause us to turn upon our internal foes with self-abhorrence—it will kindle in our souls some portion of that spirit which lives and burns in those teeming words of the apostle—“For behold this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves—yea, what indignation—yea, what fear—yea, what vehement desire—yea, what zeal—yea, what revenge!”

This will be laying the axe to the root of the tree, and will often, where all other motives fail, convert a sluggard into an early riser.

But some will say—“If the only alternative were between this practice, and wasting my time in bed, you could not plead too strongly in its favour. But my habit is to devote as few hours to sleep as if I went to rest early, and rose at five or six o’clock. I find the calm and silent night more favourable to study than any other season, and therefore sit up late instead of rising early in the morning.” Now, if we lived as mere insulated beings—if we had no families to train—no circle around us—no fellow-creatures near us, whom our habits could in any way affect, or our example in-

fluence, there might be some fairness in this reasoning. But, allowing it all its weight, we must deduct the decided advantage of early over late hours, (supposing the same proportion of our time, in either case, consumed in sleep,) in point of health; and besides, we must bring into account the important benefit which the eyes derive from doing their work by natural rather than artificial light. The fact, however, is, that none of us can take the world thus single-handed. We have all our associations, our links with, and bearings on society; and however it may personally affect some comparatively insulated individuals, to be either late or early risers, I believe no one will pretend that the former practice could act so beneficially as the latter, on the general state of society. No one will, I think, contend that late hours are, on the whole, friendly to good habits; that children are likely to grow up well, or servants to be sober, diligent, and virtuous, who turn night into day, and day into night. It always strikes me, then, as a mark of selfishness, as a proof of carelessness about, I will say the souls of others, when a man claims an exemption from the duty of early rising, merely because he may fancy that it suits his own convenience. I do not wish to lay down harsh or unbending rules, nor to say that, where there

is inveterate habit, where a man is perhaps far advanced in life, and where it has become a second nature to sit up late, he is bound, on his peril, to turn round, and swim against the current. My desire is to submit to the conscientious consideration of those who have not thus curtailed their liberty of action, whether, in the balancing of this account, it is not an important item that, as far as example goes, the early riser is constantly spreading a healthy, and the late riser an unhealthy influence around him; that the former is constantly teaching a beneficial, and the latter an injurious lesson to the families in which he lives or sojourns, and especially to the members of those families whose characters are yet to form, and with whom good or bad example is most likely to bear with powerful and permanent effect.

ESSAY VII.

ON THE VALUE OF A DAY.

IT often happens that the very same truth which we have been, from whatever cause, long in the habit of disregarding, may, by some accidental association, by being thrown into some new form, or by striking us in some new way, or by appearing in some new light, come home with unwonted

power and interest to the mind. The most trifling circumstance may be productive of this effect. For instance, we all know the vast importance of time, and how everything depends upon the use we make of the days allotted to us here. We know this theoretically, but we do not daily, and hourly, and practically, feel it as we ought. Nevertheless, a matter light as air has sometimes impressed with the most solemn emphasis upon my soul the priceless value of one single day. My mind has, in a word, gone through the following process. I have sometimes been under an erroneous apprehension that the present was a day later in the month than it actually was. Yesterday, for example, I felt sure for a time that it was the fifteenth, when something suddenly reminded me that it was but the fourteenth day of the month. On this, and on similar occasions, for with me they have not been unfrequent, the impression has been such as it would not be easy to describe. I have felt that a day had been lost and found again, and that I had recovered and recalled it from the past. I have experienced the most lively sensation at the idea that I had still in my possession what I had thought was gone. I have rejoiced over it like some rescued treasure. I have been filled with the most encouraging thoughts and fervent resolutions. God, I have

said to myself, has given me this opportunity afresh, and this day a second time, and shall I not render it back unto Him again? Shall I not devote it to His glory? Shall it not be “a day much to be observed unto the Lord?”

Sometimes, but particularly on one occasion, when waking in the morning, that voice which spoke to the prophet, saying, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” has seemed to address me in these words—“For what purpose are you continued here? Why have you been brought back from the region of dreams and shadows into the waking certainty of actual life? Why is this mortal being still lengthened out? Why have you been brought to see the light of this opening day?”

What answer could reason or could conscience give to these solemn questions? To me they put what I had known before into a new form. They gave impressiveness and power to persuasions already established in my mind. They cast a vivid and convincing light upon truths too prone to slumber in the soul. They made me feel with renovated force, the perfect folly of living as if God had sent us here to fret our brief life away in fruitless cares, to catch at shadows, to “sow the wind and reap the whirlwind,” “to consume our days in vanity and our years in trouble.” No, I said to myself, this cannot be the design for

which a God of infinite wisdom, love, and goodness has continued me in being, and brought me in safety to see the rising of another sun. My life, my understanding, my heart, have been given me for nobler purposes. "I will arise" from this bed, where through his kind providence I have slept in safety, "and go to my Father." I will enter into my closet, and pray to the God of my life. I will thank Him for my creation and preservation. I will acknowledge his mercies, and will meet the intentions of his goodness. I will live this day as if it were my last on earth. I will work out my salvation, I will prepare for heaven, "while it is called to-day, before the night cometh when no man can work."

On waking in the morning it may serve to invigorate the mind, and to touch and oil the springs of holy resolutions, to ask ourselves this question—Why should I not, by the grace of God assisting me, spend this day better than I have ever spent a day before? I have a new field to act in. No foe has yet assailed my peace; no tempter has yet invaded the paradise of my soul. It is true that, in spite of all my earnest, anxious resolves, some portion of the accursed thing has marred, more or less, the sweet tranquillity, and disturbed the repose, of former days. No one of them has satisfied my mind, or been past to my

full content. I have prayed and I have praised with a sincere and thankful heart, but I have erred and strayed like a lost sheep. I have resolved with the full intention of my soul, but I have broken my resolutions. I have wished, I have longed, I have panted, for all the mind that was in Christ Jesus—its spotless innocence, its celestial calm, its heaven below; but I have never reached the level of these aspirations. Nor can I ever hope to do so. Days to come, as well as days now gone, must ever leave me at infinite distance from that all-perfect model of essential goodness. But why should I not strive this day to come nearer to the prize of my high calling than I have ever done before? Let me then watch and pray against every disturbance from without, and every subtle temptation from within. Let me resist the first assaults of the enemy; let me keep myself, that that wicked one touch me not. Let me commit the treasure of this new gift, this new day, fresh, and as yet unsullied and unspotted by sin, into the hands of God as a faithful Creator. Let it be, in comparison of the past, the best and crowning day of my life. Let me enter this day, deeper than before, into the mysteries of godliness, and into the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear him. Let me penetrate further into the interior of that land of

promise, and make fresh discoveries in those regions that lie within the soul: those regions of the rest that remaineth to the people of God; those regions known only as the mind is purified and the soul is sanctified; those regions containing within their bosom treasures which my eye hath not yet seen, nor mine ear heard of, nor mine heart conceived. Let me then this day ascend to loftier heights than I have gained before, or rather let me sink down deeper into that solitude, silence, and repose in which God manifests himself to the soul, and in which the Spirit witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God.

ESSAY VIII.

ON MODERN EXTREMES IN RELIGION.

I REMEMBER to have heard an amusing anecdote of a clergyman, who, about seventy years ago, went out to India. The gown in which he was wont to officiate having become in course of time tattered and full of holes, he procured materials from England to make a new one; and these he committed to a native tailor, putting the

old gown into his hand, with a strict injunction that he should cut out and copy precisely after that pattern. The tailor made a long delay. Many days unaccountably elapsed; but at length his tardiness was fully accounted for; he had imitated his model so effectually, that every hole and tear and tatter in the old gown appeared most faithfully delineated, and scrupulously responded to, in the new.

Now, is it unfair to ask whether some of our modern theologians do not somewhat resemble this Calcutta tailor? Does not their overweening attachment to antiquity incline them to a servile adoption of its blots and blemishes? Does it not dispose them to an unseasonable revival of mere accidents of the Christian system, which were suitable to the tastes and manners and habits of a modification of society altogether different from our own. The same tendency to go back for guidance, in mere non-essentials, to early centuries, manifests itself in a desire to *dress* in every thing, after the model of our anglican reformers. Hence the rigidity with which some would pin us down, at every point, to the letter of the rubric.

Now, I admit it fully, that there had been amongst our clergy a great divergement to the opposite point; a slovenliness, a neglect of order,

a vulgarizing of our grand and solemn services, a coming down from our high position to the broad and common level, as if the great object were to get rid of every thing which could distinguish a church, from a dissenting meeting-house. There is nothing, I believe, more deadly to the real interests of our establishment than this. Where we see a man of exalted rank smitten with the love of inferior company, and striving (not because he is humble in heart, for that would produce far different fruits, but because he hates refinement) to throw off whatever may obstruct his thorough amalgamation with the common mass, we pronounce, at once, that such a man is running headlong to his ruin. In the same way, the best friends of our establishment cannot but deplore this downward tendency, this vain attempt to render our church popular, by stripping her of her beautiful garments—vain, I repeat it, because, whatever may be the attractives of dissenting ministrations, ours cannot have them. We may awkwardly attempt it; but we cannot succeed, any more than the queen's state coach could gracefully fly at the rate of fifteen miles an hour, on the common posting road. The grand machinery of our church is not suited to the light evolutions which dissenting bodies can perform. They have excitements about them which she has

not; and, if she throw aside her legitimate attractions, the decency of her solemn services, her chaste and modest decorations, she becomes a mere *caput mortuum*, neither one thing nor the other, refusing to do her own part, and still so bound by rules and shackled by restrictions, as to be wholly unable to do any other part becomingly or successfully. It is, however, much to be lamented that the reaction which this laxity has occasioned, should have run into an opposite extreme. I cannot help thinking that, in every great system like our established church, imperfect as every human institution must be, there is much, over which it would be well for charity and moderation to throw a veil; and that, were such the prevailing temper of the body, use, or rather disuse, might render some minor observances, suitable to the times in which they were at first enjoined, but not to our own, virtually obsolete. I believe that it is often better that such lesser matters should, if I may so speak, wear out, than be formally and authoritatively repealed. The grosser particles which were mixed up with our system, constructed as it was in troublous times, found their way, in course of years, to the bottom, and there might have lain, till Providence had prepared a vessel into which the purer element might have been strained, or filtered, or

poured with steady, gentle hand, so as not to disturb the dross deposited below. But what I lament is, that a spirit should have been evoked, whose great anxiety is to set the lees and dregs afloat, to shake the vessel, and bring the sediment to the surface. Here, I am convinced, the *summum jus* is the *summa injuria*, and that straining at gnats may give us camels to swallow. Allow the stickler for rigid form to be right, one by one, in each trifling matter of detail, he is wrong in the proportion of zeal and labour which he expends upon them. He may be right in paying his tithe of mint and anise and cummin; but, if his heart be narrowed up in these, it cannot expand itself to the breadth of the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." And, in this connection, I cannot but make the following observation: Presumptuous as is the manner in which some depreciate baptism, and inconsistent as it seems in a churchman to deny that infants may receive the regenerating grace of God in that appointed sacrament, yet, unless this latter doctrine be held with a full admission that the adult transgressor, living without God, requires as entire and radical a change as if he had not been baptized at all, in that case, such a notion seems to me to extract the very marrow, and to evacuate the very essence of the Gospel reve-

lation. What I mean is this : there are a variety of passages in the New Testament, which describe a great and decisive change, by which a soul is “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son,” and becomes a new man and a new creature, invested with new apprehensions, new affections, and new desires. Amongst a variety of instances, let us take the following : “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. xviii. 3) : “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John iii. 3) : “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. v. 17) : “That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephes. iv. 22—24) : “For ye were sometimes darkness ; but now are ye light in the Lord” (Ephes. v. 8).

Now, if a man reads his Bible under the persuasion that he, though ever so dead in trespasses and sins, is not a capable subject of experiencing and being conscious of the great change which

these scriptures so pointedly describe, because all this applies to what was transacted at his baptism, why, really, I would say that such an one has no more chance of spiritual life than that man would have of natural life who lay under water and refused to be lifted up, because he had been told that somebody, when he was an infant, saved him from a watery grave. Such a man must read the conversion of Lydia, of the jailor at Philippi, of the Ethiopian eunuch, and of St. Paul himself, as a matter of mere history, in which he has no immediate concern or interest. He passed the Rubicon at his infant baptism; and, though he may allow that his case demands improvement or restoration or renewal, or whatever else he may call his half-conversion, yet he cannot by possibility experience a transition parallel to that, in which these great patterns of the Christian life have been our precursors and examples. In vain, as it respects his instance, has St. Paul declared that "for this cause he obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16). The same exclusive reference of the most vital passages of scripture to an event which took place when he was a mere passive and unconscious subject, this same reference which

renders the word of God so far of no effect, must blunt the edge of every impression which he can receive in reading of those wonders of grace which were displayed at the conversion of St. Augustine, St. Cyprian, and others of the ancient fathers. Their baptism synchronised with their first-felt passage into marvellous light; and, according to certain views, the latter is inseparable from the former. Consequently such persons read their heart-stirring histories as something belonging to a race of beings essentially different from themselves. Their own baptism is over: their transformation took place when their minds were sleeping in an embryo state. It cannot be repeated. And, though they may have been the chief of sinners, lost to virtue, and aliens in their heart from God, they have nothing for it but a fanning of the old flame. No vitalizing spark can reach them. There can be no dawning of a new day, no awaking from sleep, no rising from the dead, that Christ may give them light. Such are the thoughts which sometimes excite my fears, that, though these may be the days of increase of learning, yet that that learning may not be in the school of Christ.

I will conclude these observations with one remark. This overweening value set on forms, and circumstantials, and positive institutions, is

vindicated from the charge of quenching, at least clogging, the spiritual aspirations of the soul, by reference to bright examples of former piety, to splendid and practical contradictions to that charge. It is said: "Look at Fenelon, look at Pascal, &c.; and were not they as near to the angelic life as mortal man can rise?" Allow that they were. But they were born in the bosom of a cumbrous system. Their attachment to it grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. Their minds were superior to the element in which they lived, and struggled through its cloudy vapours into freer air. But far different is the case of those who were born in purer climes, and who, the very converse of the former, would sink down, of their own accord, into the grosser atmosphere of by-gone days. The fact is, that these volunteers for what the others patiently submitted to are the direct opposites, rather than the parallel, of those illustrious names in which they would find a sanction. Such seems to me precisely the spirit which the great apostle opposed in the Judaizing Gentiles. It was the voluntary assumption of a yoke which the Jews had borne as a matter of obedience, and not of choice. It was this which led St. Paul to argue with so much zeal against the circumcision of the Gentile converts. God had, for wise reasons, imposed a system of

carnal ordinances upon the Jew: it was, therefore, his part submissively to bear it; and his doing so implied no preference of the will, no congeniality of his moral tastes with that load of minute observances. But for the Gentile Christian, born, as it were, in a land of freedom, to choose his own portion in this house of bondage, was, in the apostle's estimation, to become a voluntary slave. And thus, while he himself took and circumcised Timothy, because he was of Jewish birth and blood, and thought it no drawback upon his alacrity in running the race for heaven; he denounced the same circumcision in a Gentile convert, as no less than a fall from grace, and an apostacy from his high profession. "Stand fast," says he, "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul—I who was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, I who circumcised my own son in the faith, I, Paul—say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."

ESSAY IX.

ON FREE GRACE AND HOLINESS.

IT is contended by some that the doctrine of free grace is unfriendly to a life of holiness ; and that if we believe our acceptance in the sight of God, to be wholly irrespective of our own deserts, the grand motive to obedience will be wanting. And this assuredly would, if there were no higher elements in religion than those which mere nature furnishes, be a just and fair conclusion. Such is human nature, that the man who felt that eternal happiness was the price of his endeavours, would work more constantly and diligently than he who believed that his salvation was purchased for him by another, and whose only motive to exertion was a sense of gratitude for that favour. Such is, doubtless, the expectation which we should be warranted in forming from the character of fallen humanity. But the apostle meets these reasonings, by showing that there are elements unknown to nature, in the Christian life ; that if we are justified, these arguments consequently do not apply to us ; that a new principle has been brought into action, new ingredients go to form

the compound of our case ; that it is not now a mere balance whether a man will do most for gratitude or for interest's sake. The same grace which justifies, transplants the soul into another soil, where it draws nutrition from a new earth, and receives the fructifying influences of a new heaven. Thus, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

Such are, I conceive, the grounds on which St. Paul resists the opposers of free grace. He shows that there is an item in the account, on which they have not calculated ; that if a man be justified, a change has taken place which evacuates all their reasonings ; that they are seeking not the living among the dead, but the dead among the living ; and that the language of the angel at the Saviour's sepulchre would well apply to the irrelevancy of their charges against the sincere professor of the Gospel—"He is not here ; for he is risen." Such, I repeat, is the nature of St. Paul's defence in the sixth chapter to the Romans—"What shall we say then ? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death ? Therefore we are buried with

him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The argument is something like this:—Suppose a friend of yours were placed under circumstances of strong temptation and peculiar danger, and that in the midst of these—he died; and suppose one, unaware of his release, were to express his fears that your friend could not have strength to bear up against such complicated trials, and must infallibly give way. But you know, and can tell him, that all the dangers he apprehends are over, that all his fears, however reasonable in themselves, are groundless, for that the subject of them—is dead. But still the best of men require some daily and constantly operative motive to watchfulness and holy living; and though that great change to which the apostle refers, may have passed on them, yet there are degrees of sanctity, there is a progress in grace, and men require some ever present principle to urge them on to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." If, then, it may be said, one's reliance on the work which has been done for us, be so entire—if the spirit of adoption, crying Abba Father, give such a constant and a certain sound, that daily miscarriages, infirmities, and sins do not affect one's hopes of eternal life, what is to pre-

vent our becoming careless and remiss, at any rate in trifles, and thus falling away little by little. We may shun all flagrant breaches of the law, because they would amount to proof, at least afford strong grounds of suspicion, that our hopes were all delusion. But may there not be a thousand inequalities of temper, hastinesses of the tongue, irregularities of the mind within, which we feel as infirmities, and lament as sins, but which, nevertheless, do not shake our confidence, nor cause the soul to doubt its filial relationship to God?

What is then to control these lesser movements of innate corruption; and to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," if we still feel that our acceptance with God is dependent wholly upon the righteousness of another? It will be allowed that the believer has a powerful motive in the conviction that unless his faith is known by its fruits, and works by love, his hopes are built upon the sand. This will make him dread and avoid all wilful and presumptuous sin, as that which would disprove his adoption into the family of God. Gratitude also to Him who purchased his redemption, and to Him who pardoned sin on such gracious terms, will constrain him, by the most affecting motives, to please God, and walk in newness of life. Bound by such unspeak-

able obligations, there will be a voice, which, in every hour of temptation, speaks to his conscience and to his heart, saying, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" But powerful as these persuasives are, they address themselves rather to marked occasions, and to matters which we should call trials of principle. It is at such moments that we feel the sincerity of our faith, and loyalty of our hearts put to the test, and are disposed, in the words before repeated, to say, "How shall I do this *great* wickedness?" But what is sweetly to compose the mind in the midst of hourly cares, and to smooth all the ruggednesses of life's daily path? What is to enable us to "give to God each moment as it flies," to shun every approach, and abstain from all appearance of evil, to present our body, soul, and spirit a living sacrifice unto God, and to make it our great aim, however infallibly and infinitely we shall fall short, to become pure as Christ is pure, holy as God is holy, perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect? What, it will be said, is to feed this constant flame in one who works neither to purchase heaven, nor, in the ordinary sense of the expression, to save his soul, thereby.

Nay, I will put the difficulty which suggests this question in a still stronger point of view. I

will suppose a person in a state of justification, to fall, nevertheless, into the erroneous conception that, let him do as he would, and live as loosely as man's sinful heart could wish, he was infallibly predestined to eternal glory. I do not mean to say that, in point of fact, any enlightened mind could thus greatly err; but for argument's sake I will suppose the case. Would such a one, then, have a sufficient and prevailing motive to lead a godly life? I answer, that a truly converted man, even if he did hold the above preposterous notion, *would* have that sufficient and prevailing motive; for the soul when justified (in which conversion is implied) is, *ipso facto*, gifted with new senses, to perceive the nature of essential happiness: it is born again, and sees the kingdom of God. Such a man loves God's law for its own sake, and feels that in keeping of it there is great reward. However his evil nature may incline him to sin, yet he acknowledges that sin is misery. It is against the law of his mind, and the deeper current of his heart, that he breaks the least of God's commandments; so that, in a certain sense, "it is no longer he that does it, but sin that dwelleth in him." He has the same motive, the same principle of self-preservation and self-love to deter him from sin, that the natural man has to warn him from whatever might wound or lacerate his

body. It is not necessary that the latter should be prevented, by a sense of danger, from exposing himself to pain. No; he avoids suffering as an evil in itself, and, irrespectively of all consequences, he dreads pain as pain. And so it is in spiritual things with the child of light. He is no longer dazzled by the gaudy show and false appearances of the world. He has got behind the scenes, and examined the apparatus by which man's moral mechanism is worked. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and they, and they alone, are instructed in the true nature of things. They see in what that happiness, which others are flying after in every direction but the right one, really and substantially consists. They have also visited the fountain of those bitter streams which inundate this unhappy world. They know that the grand source of human suffering arises, not from outward trials, but from unhappy tempers; that pride and envy, revenge and hatred, that unmortified lusts, and unsatisfied desires—that these are the tormentors of the breast, the worms that die not, and the fires that are not quenched. On the other hand, they are assured, not by the cold processes of abstract reasoning, but by warm and vital contact with the things themselves, that humility and meekness, purity and contentment—that good will towards men,

and universal charity—that affections set on things above and a heart reposing in the love of God—that these are the true constituents and elements of that essential happiness and that participation of the divine nature, to which the Redeemer “both died, and rose, and revived,” that He might bring back the alienated heart of man. Thus might the once enlightened mind “abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good,” as unerringly and as tenaciously as those higher natures which “keep their first estate.” Thus might the same law, not that of necessity, nor of physical incapacity to sin, but of moral attraction and constraining love—which binds the angels in heaven, bind also every converted soul on earth. And this would assuredly be the case were fallen man as free to act as they are. But we have our treasure in earthen vessels. And though, abstractedly considered, the man who delighted in the law of God would keep that law in spite of any such false notions as I have supposed; yet, encumbered as we are by flesh and blood, and exposed as we are to the solicitations of a deceitful heart, we should thank God that our faith is clogged by no such errors, and that there is in reality no such drawback upon the strength and energy with which we have to wrestle for the prize of heaven. The believer in the whole truth

of God, knows that there is no such anomaly in spiritual things, as the unrighteous inheriting the kingdom of God. He knows that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; and that unless we are meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, we can have no entrance into their calm abodes of blessedness. This, then, is a constraining motive, independently of the present reward, for “working out our salvation with fear and trembling.” Besides this there is the constant remembrance that “if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;” and that those alone who “are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God.” Hence arises a holy jealousy of ourselves, a watchfulness of our lives and tempers, a constant feeling that holiness is the pulse by which alone we can ascertain, that the life’s blood of salvation circulates in our veins. Add to this the force of gratitude, that the Christian feels it “a joyful and pleasant thing” to be thankful ; and understands—

“that a grateful mind

By owing owes not but still pays, at once

Indebted and discharged.”

Thus it is that various motives unite and “all things work together for good to them that love God.” Various winds combine to waft the des-

tined vessel to the haven where it would be. The Christian soldier is not left protected in one part, and defenceless in another. It is not to "the breastplate of righteousness," nor to "the shield of faith," nor to the "helmet of salvation," nor to the "sword of the Spirit," that he trusts alone. No—it is in the whole armour of God that his impregnable strength resides. Clothed in this panoply "he fears no evil tidings; for his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord." He feels an assurance deep as the centre of his own heart, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

ESSAY X.

THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT FAMINE IN IRELAND.*

It is, I believe, the received opinion amongst men of science, that the potato disease is occa-

* Written in the beginning of the summer of 1847.

sioned by animalcula. How wonderfully, then, does this display the power of God and the nothingness of man ! It has pleased Him to humble this nation in the dust ; to confound the wisdom of its rulers ; to shake the pillars of our social fabric ; to call forth “ the pestilence to walk in darkness and destruction to waste at noonday ;” to “ put down the mighty from their seat ;” and to write “ upon the plaister of the wall of all their palaces,” not with “ the fingers of a man’s hand,” but with the pen of a chastening providence, “ Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting ;” “ Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton ; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.”

How then has this awful visitation been brought about ? I answer, by a failure in the ordinary produce of the earth ; and this too at the very time when we were told that new modes of tillage, a system of agriculture unknown before, a total revolution in the manner of cultivating the soil, was, on scientific principles, about to change the whole face of things, so that this country, instead of being over-peopled, could feed double its pre-

sent population with all abundance. Thus it was anticipated, that “our garners would be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep would bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; that our oxen would be strong to labour, and that there would be no decay; no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets.” Well, then, all these proud speculations have ended in a famine, which, calling in pestilence to its aid, is sweeping away the poor in tens and hundreds of thousands. But to effect this fearful purpose, to cause this mighty ruin, what is the instrument employed? Has God commissioned superhuman agents? Has He “cast upon us the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels amongst us?” Has He given up our “cattle to the hail, and our flocks to hot thunderbolts?” Has He caused “the earth to open her mouth,” as it did when it “swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram?” Has He “compassed our Jerusalem with armies?” Has He “brought a nation on us from far to eat up our harvest and our bread, which our sons and our daughters should eat?” No; the merciless and resistless foe who shakes the land to its foundation, who goes forth destroying, and I fear still further to destroy every barrier that human power or human contri-

vance can oppose, is no other than an animalcule, too small to be perceptible to the naked eye. Thus has it pleased a mysterious Providence to “crush us before the moth,” or rather before a living atom, to which the moth is a creature of vast dimensions. Thus has He “chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.”

If this thought be calculated, as most assuredly it is, to humble in the dust, it may also suggest to us some grounds of hope and confidence in these truly awful times. The same God who can chasten and destroy, can also rescue and restore by the most unexpected, and to human calculation, the most unsuitable and disproportioned instruments and means. As to temporal prospects, to whatever point we turn our eyes, dark clouds seem gathering. Nor can I at all agree with some, who consider it a duty to look on what *they call* the bright side. To the true believer, indeed, there is always a bright side, though not in the sense in which the man of this world means it. *He* knows that above the dark cloud which casts its shadow here below, eternal sunshine dwells. He knows that chastisements are but blessings in disguise, and that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” It is thus that the Christian is

always a hopeful being. “He will not be afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.” But this is quite distinct from that obstinacy with which some would arm their minds against the solemn warnings of the times. *They* have their portion in this life, and are resolved that nothing shall persuade them that that portion is in danger. They shut their ears against the thunderings of God’s voice; they close their eyes upon the flashes of the lightning of God’s providence; and all because they cannot bear, and consequently will not admit, the thought that their false peace may be invaded, and that their rest in things below may be disturbed. This, I do believe, lies at the root of that insensibility, for which men often get much credit, as if it betokened a cheerful and contented mind. And so it would be perhaps man’s wisdom thus to put a good face on things, if there were no other life than this. It would be well in this case to secure at least some present peace, let the worst that may be come, saying, “Let us eat and drink, if to-morrow we die.” It would be making the best of a bad bargain, if there were no higher interests than the concerns of earth. But the Christian believes and knows that these concerns are to our whole history but as a drop of water to the ocean; and in virtue of that persuasion he

feels far differently as to the signs of the times, however indicative of trials and disasters. Where religion is firmly embraced, and its truths assume their legitimate importance to the mind, with men so influenced, these truths are relied and calculated on, as real things, and plain matter of fact. The word of God declares, then, that "when the judgments of God are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Now such men *really believe* this; at least they believe it to be according to the divine intention. If so, can they join in full sympathy of heart with those who sigh only for the removal of the painful remedy, without the extraction of the root, or even a mitigation of the symptoms of the disease? No: surely if we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" if we really consider temporal things of less importance than things eternal, we would not, if we had our choice, desire to have the chastening hand removed before we had learned the lessons which a gracious Providence would teach thereby. However our natural feelings might dispose us to lament the privations and sufferings which afflict the land, a higher charity would check the wish, that prosperity and plenty should return, before any ameliorating change had been produced. It would be cruel mercy and mistaken kindness thus to bring

upon the country, had we the power, a curse and not a blessing. Who can deny that before this visitation the general current of society was against religion; that fulness of bread and estrangement from God met together? that plentiful harvests, and forgetfulness of Him who sends the sunshine and the rain, embraced each other? And what Christian heart could cheer the thought of things flowing back into their former channels? These are some of the considerations which place the religious man out of the pale of common sympathy, and make him feel himself an insulated being. Others are interested for the bodies, he for the souls of those around us. They view the present famine simply as an evil; he considers it as a medicine administered by the hand of God. They pray, if pray they do at all, unconditionally—"remove thy stroke away from us;" he prays that the sins which call down these judgments should be repented of and renounced. This is the prayer he offers, because he knows that the chastisement will cease when it is no more needed; that if the cause be removed, the effect will not remain; that if the substance of moral evil be withdrawn, temporal suffering, which is but its gloomy shadow, will disappear. It is hard, indeed, precisely to define the position of the en-

lightened mind, under circumstances like the present. It is not that unbending posture, in which it could stand by and see the sufferings that prevail, and in the spirit of cool calculation, desire that still more lashes should be laid upon the back of an afflicted people. Nor, on the other hand, could the person who feels for the honour of God, or the true interests of men, willingly call back those times in which temporal blessings were showered upon a stubborn and rebellious race. No; if ever there was a period for the emphatic and ceaseless repetition of that summary of all prayer, "Thy will be done," that period is now. Now is the time for a prayer which leaves everything implicitly and unreservedly in the hands of God—a prayer ascending day and night from the hearts of God's people to a throne of grace—a prayer which chooses not for ourselves nor points out to Providence how we would have him act, but which implores direction and guidance, such as those require who tread a wide and dark expanse, on which no path appears but the upward path of prayer to heaven.

For my own part, it appears to me that God has closed up every opening of escape, and hemmed us in on every side, that we may not walk by sight, but fly upward on the wings of faith to

Him who "sitteth above the water-flood, be the earth never so unquiet." I am perfectly convinced that the present famine, and the future prospect of its increase, are the greatest blessings which could have been in mercy sent, if they make us practically feel, and realize to ourselves as substantial truth, that the issues of life and death are in the hands of God. I am persuaded that if the pressure of the chastisement which is now upon us, force from our hearts that earnestness and intensity of prayer which God delights to hear and answer, the clouds will disperse, and the shining of a brighter sun than we have seen before, proclaim, that He who makes that sun to rise, is now "looking upon the bow of his everlasting covenant," the signal of his darling attribute of mercy. I am persuaded, that all these blessings would flow down and meet the ascending prayers "of many persons," if, as a people, the times had taught us to fly for succour where effectual succour can alone be found. But individually we can be responsible only for ourselves. We may form our opinions, as to what means and instruments might save the country. We may frame our theories, but we cannot reduce those theories to practice, upon any extended scale. We cannot set the wheels of society a-going, nor control the movements of the public mind. But

there is a world within, where we can, by the grace of God assisting, dispose the whole economy as we wish, and carry out the dictates of our own hearts in giving unto God the things that are God's. Let us say then to ourselves, "How wide soever the spirit of disobedience may be diffused, here, at least, there shall be loyalty to the King of Heaven. Here the Lord God Omnipotent, and He alone, shall reign. Here 'incense shall be offered unto his name, and a pure offering.'"

From a few such hearts as these, what prayers might rise! From a faithful band, however small—from two or three such "Israelites indeed," what powerful supplications might ascend with prevalence to God! At all events, let every one who reads these lines resolve that, for his own part, he will give the issue of this matter a fair trial. Let him resolve to do the only wise, the only needful thing, namely, to devote himself to God, and then let him see what this will effect for himself and for his country. For the latter he *may* fail; for the former he *cannot*; but as an encouragement of the hope that even to others he may be a blessing, let him remember, as we have before observed, that our present awful chastisement has been inflicted by an animalcule, to which the minutest insect with which our eyes are con-

versant, is a stately giant. And if so, why may not the “effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man” avail much in lightening the load, if not in removing the entire weight of our afflictions?

ESSAY XI.

ON CONSTITUTIONAL DISSIMILARITY TO THE WORLD.

THE conversion of a soul to God is not, I would observe, such a change as implies the removal of one man, and the substitution of another man in his stead. It does not mean so entire a transformation of the character as that the new retains no traces of the old ; nor, in fact, would this magnify the power of divine grace so much as that which is really produced by the regeneration of a soul ; for the former would be merely the destruction of one subject, and the creation of another. But the work effected in our death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness, is a still more mighty energy of omnipotence than the annihilation of what exists, and the raising out of nothing that which does not exist. Thus, we are always taught that the new creation far exceeds the old ; and why ?

Because the former was but the stupendous exercise of independent and self-sufficient agency—the creation out of mere nonentity; whereas the latter is the forcing already existent and antagonist elements to yield their opposites; educing light from darkness, life from death, and good from evil. It is true that in the conversion of a soul “old things are passed away and all things are become new.” But though we “put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness,” still there is no loss of continuity or identity. The latter man is but the former purified, sanctified, and raised. It is with the resurrection of the soul, as it will be with the resurrection of the body. In the latter, what “is sown in corruption, will be raised in incorruption; what is sown in dishonour, will be raised in glory; what is sown in weakness will be raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” Here the transformation will exceed all that it can enter into the heart to conceive; but still identity will be preserved. However sublimated and exalted, each chosen spirit will, at the resurrection, rejoice in the partner of all his trials here below; each soldier of the cross will be clothed upon with that

armour in which he fought his way through the ranks of a confederated world. So it is with the soul, when, risen with Christ, it sets its affections on things above. Its position is changed, its views are changed. But still the substance, the material on which this change is wrought, continues to be the same. The mind preserves its native tendencies, the peculiar turn, the characteristic features of its individual temperament. Though connected with different scenes, and associated with another class of objects, the man is, in fact, now to the spiritual system, what he had been to the natural. It is the same actor, though upon a new stage, and though the part he plays be the very opposite of that which he had performed before.

Thus, for instance, who does not see in Saul, the ceaseless persecutor, and Paul, the unwearied champion of the faith, an unbroken continuity of character, though at one time "darkness" and at another "light in the Lord?" Who does not, along the whole line of Peter's pilgrimage, discern the same impetuous energy and ardent zeal, before his conversion exposing him to fall below, and after his conversion enabling him to rise above, the level of his fellow apostles?

In carrying out this principle I have been led frequently to observe that persons who have

been converted in maturer years from a life of thoughtlessness and sin, had never been, previously to that change, altogether in sympathy with the many, or like the crowd around them.

There was something peculiar in their habits and dispositions, that marked them off from the average of mankind. It is the distinguishing characteristic of Christ's sheep that "they are not of the world." Such all admit they are, when enlightened from above and brought to the unity of faith. But I am disposed to go farther, and to say, that before their effectual calling they had in many cases at least this mark upon them; *they were not of the world*. The world did not love them as "it loves its own." All men did not speak well of them; they were not popular, nor were they favourites in society; they did not seem to be in their element, to be at their ease, nor to be at home; they did not keep time with the general movement; they were not men to be depended on in the warfare against the cross—regular soldiers like those of whom the prophet Joel speaks—"they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks; neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path." No; the character I speak of finds no place in this world's systems, into

which he can comfortably fit. He cannot use that moderation in sensual and selfish enjoyments which "the wise and prudent" recommend and practice. His more ardent thirst for happiness impels him to go farther in the ways and sink down deeper in the mystery of sin than the world sanctions, approves, or tolerates; and while he feels "a mighty famine in the land, and fain would fill his belly with the husks which the swine do eat, no man gives unto him;" no one feels for him; he has passed the limits which the world prescribes, and for such offenders the world has no compassion. Thus it often happens that the same peculiar temperament which ought to, and which eventually will, raise men above their fellows, taking for the present a wrong direction, plunges them into proportionably deeper waters. But even where such marked and lamentable consequences do not attend their constitutional dissimilarity to the general taste, there is something in the persons I describe which prevents their ever getting into thorough train with the popular feeling. They may strive to do so, but God has not intended, nature has not fitted them for such purposes. What others throw off with ease sits awkwardly and constrainedly upon them. There is something overdone and overacted in the levities they assume; their gaiety seems but the thin

covering thrown over a cheerless heart ; they are like a being divided against itself, as if two men were forcibly linked together, the one of whom was ashamed to look the other in the face.

There is no instance in which this self-perversion, this wretched attempt to perform a part which ill becomes the actor, more conspicuously appears than in the case of young men, of a particular class and mould of character. Such have often reminded me of Solomon's awful picture. "At the window of my house I looked through the casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding, passing through the street, near her corner ; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night." What strikes me here is the horrid desecration of what seems formed and fitted for far different scenes. And so it is when a spirit which, even by nature, is not "of the world," is brought into captivity and made to grind in her prison house. Fain would he be as others are, and blunt the edge of all his fine perceptions, and forget the height from which he had fallen. But "it is hard to kick against the pricks." "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" No ; those who are thus unlike the world may become its slaves, but they cannot become its chosen com-

panions, or its familiar friends. Oh, if these lines should meet the eye of one of those who are thus in double bondage, linked to a system with which they have no concord, selling themselves for nought and obtaining nothing in return, losing their own souls and gaining not so much of the world as to set their foot on—to such I would conclude by offering this counsel, warmly flowing from my heart.

You find it vain, with all your endeavours, to please the world; and still less is it attainable by your utmost efforts to fill the void which aches within, with any thing which the world can offer. Your affections ascend no higher than this earth, and yet you feel yourself a stranger here. You are seeking rest and finding none; you are striving to press some moisture, to wring some drops of refreshment out of a barren land and sterile soil; but, alas! there is no water there; the clouds drop down no rain upon it; “the heaven over it is stayed from dew.” Hungry and thirsty your soul is fainting in you, and why? Because you are wandering in a strange country, amidst “a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.” You never can succeed in gaining a footing, or settling down satisfactorily in the world. You may sink below it, because you may invert those capabilities which

qualify you to rise above it ; but upon its level you can never take your stand. You are a vessel prepared unto honour. You may be perverted, degraded, and debased ; you may become like “ salt which has lost his savour, which is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill,” which is “ good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.” But you can never become “ a vessel unto dishonour,” a useful slave, a convenient drudge, a hewer of wood and drawer of water to the world. The construction of your mind, the constitution of your heart, your infirmities, your energies, your deep depressions, your lofty aspirations, bespeak you, though far from your country and from your home, a citizen of no mean city, one whose conversation ought to be in heaven. You are going against the stream and current of your nature. You were formed for God, and you cannot rest until you rest in Him. “ Arise then and shake thyself from the dust : put on thy beautiful garments : loose thyself from the bonds of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” “ Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bare you.” Hear the voice that says, “ Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Obey the call which

summons you away—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

ESSAY XII.

ON THE THREE-FOLD STATE OF MAN.

It can hardly be denied, I think, that St. Paul, in the seventh and eighth chapters to the Romans, describes a three-fold state of man. The 1st.—Where he is living according to the course of this world, and, as far as conscience is concerned, contented and at ease—ch. vii. 9. "For I was alive without the law once." 2. Where light breaks in upon the mind, and the nature of true happiness is discovered, but where there is not power to throw aside the weight of sin, or to lay hold upon the tempting, glittering prize. This is described in the latter verses of this chapter, and particularly in 22, 23. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another

law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Then comes the third state exhibited to us in chap. viii. 2, 3, 4. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Such would appear to me, the natural distribution of this context. I shall not, however, contend with those whose system leads them to oppose it. Without, therefore, building upon this passage, I believe the theory will be admitted by all experienced Christians, that in the life of a converted sinner, there *are* three stages. 1. A state of liberty, because unchecked by conscience. 2. A state of bondage. 3. A state of (at least comparative) liberty again. Richard Baxter has somewhere noticed and well described these different grades; and proposed this three-fold classification. The celebrated Cudworth also has done the same. He has, moreover, accompanied his observation with the following curious remark. I insert it here, because it may be well for many to have it

before them, at their seasons of self-examination. "Some men, instead of going forward from the second state unto a higher perfection, wheel back again unto the first; just as if the children of Israel, after they had been brought out of Egypt, and travelled awhile in the desert of Arabia, where the law was given, instead of entering into Canaan, should have wheeled back into Egypt, and there, enjoying the garlic and onions and flesh-pots thereof, should persuade themselves that this was indeed the true land of promise that floweth with milk and honey. And there is very great danger lest, when men have been tired out by wandering a long time in the dry and barren wilderness of the law, where they cannot enjoy the pleasure of sin as formerly, and yet have not arrived to the relish and love of righteousness, by reason of their impatience, they should at last make more haste than good speed, being seduced by some false shows of freedom that are very tempting to such weary travellers, and promise much comfort and refreshment to them, inviting them to sit down under their shadow."

In taking a view of the three classes above alluded to, we are struck with the fact, that in many respects the first and third resemble each other more than the second class does either. The man whose practice and whose wishes are

at constant variance, who is slave to the vices which he hates, and who, as in a paroxysm of phrenzy, tramples on the pearls whose matchless price he knows, and who mars and scatters to the winds that peace and happiness which he longs and pants for as the hart for cooling streams; it is clear that such a man is as far from the careless thoughtless freedom of the world, as from the glorious liberty of the children of God. He is in a transition state. He is on his passage from one country to another; and while tossed upon the sea, his life differs altogether from that which is led on the shore he leaves, and on the shore for which he makes.

These two countries may be as dissimilar as the most foreign regions of the earth, nevertheless they cannot but have more in common with each other, than the troubled ocean has with either. In the world there is false peace—in the Christian life there is true peace—in the transition state, from the one to the other, there is no peace. And infinitely better as it is to be in the last than in the first of these three conditions, yet it is evident that the worldling who enjoys the pleasures of sin for a season, and the Christian who habitually rejoices in God his Saviour, must in appearance at least, be more alike than either of them is to the mourner of Sion, to him whose ceaseless

lamentation is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But other causes combine to produce that comparative resemblance between the first and third classes. Religion is a matter of progress, and of degree. In its earlier stages its separation from the world, as are all its actings, is more upon the surface, than when it takes deeper root in the soul. And though sincere and warm and zealous, yet there is now more of the letter and less of the Spirit, more of nature still mingling in the movements of the newly awakened mind. This the apostle clearly intimates in the following words: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Here St. Paul speaks of a carnality which was the proof, not that they were no Christians, but that they were weak in the faith, and babes in Christ. Believers in this state, though in the kingdom of God, are still borderers and near the confines of the world. It is true they have renounced it in sincerity, and with the

full determination of the will. Nevertheless the world is viewed by such more in its exterior aspect, its fashions, habits, and conventional usages, than in its essential character as the great rival to win, and counteraction to draw, the heart from God. Hence it is that in that stage of the religious life where the world has most power, it is most palpably and ostensibly departed from, in the daily and ordinary practices of life. Its temptations are renounced, but they are not spiritually discerned. They are not met upon the field of battle within; they are not wrestled with in secret prayer; they are not encountered with, "Get thee behind me Satan." No: the warfare is waged upon external ground. The habits, more than the spirit of the world, is that against which the stand is made. And consequently the young soldier, the babe who is "yet carnal," is marked by a disconformity to the world which obtrudes itself on the notice of the most casual observer. Religion cannot be spoken of but in such a tone as if the man had two voices, the one for earthly, the other for heavenly things. There is, moreover, a peculiar language, an indescribable phraseology, which marks this incipient stage of the spiritual life. This, also, is the age of party feeling, of an overweening value for religious society, evincing, that sincere as the heart may be, it is

still dependent on creature props and human comforts, and has not found its rest in God. However mixed or equivocal these signs may be in themselves, they form, as I said, a palpable line of distinction between the individual who bears them, and all the other classes of mankind.

Not so the disciple, who has risen to a higher form in the school of Christ. His religion is more interior, and more refined. It has become more his nature, and sits easily upon him. It runs through the whole of life, and leavens the whole lump. He is the same man at all times. He has but one voice, and one vocabulary. He is thankful for the refreshment which he feels in the converse of pious friends, when they fall in his way; but he can do without it. If he has not friends to talk to, he has a God to pray to. Besides, though his charity throws its sunshine over all he sees, he cannot but discern and feel how low the standard of high professors often is. And though duty may sometimes call him into the religious, as well as the irreligious world, yet, for mere enjoyment, he would often prefer solitude, to the best society which even the former can afford. From all this, it is manifest, that the more a Christian is renewed in the spirit of his mind, the less his disconformity to the habits of the world, in mere ordinary matters, will be palpably displayed. No doubt he

will, and must, in many visible instances, “come out, and be separate from” what emphatically styles itself “the world.” But still, to none but the discerning eye and kindred spirit will it be manifest, how one who is cheerful, and at his ease, in the common intercourse of life—how he can have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, or how he can be planted in the likeness of Christ’s death. Still less can the weak and struggling Christian see, how it is in virtue of this very crucifixion—in virtue of this deep extrication of the heart from the things of earth, that his brother of higher degree can walk in that light and liberty, which he mistakes for the friendship of the world. No: the truth is, that those who are in the third state of the Christian life, are, more or less, a puzzle and an offence to those who are in the second. They are “far above out of their sight.” They have gone through a process of which the latter have no experience. They have obtained a victory which the others, judging by themselves or taught by a defective system, pronounce to be impossible. Men in the lower grade perceive that those who have ascended higher, have, somehow, slipped away, and parted company with them; but where they are gone to, or what is the nature of this transformation—it is on this point that they are so often led astray in judging. They do

not discern the signs and tokens that used to mark them, and, consequently, cannot see where their religion is. It has become too interior for their ken; and hence, they wrongly conclude of these, what Cudworth has rightly charged on others—that they have, as he calls it, “wheeled back again into their original state of friendship with the world.” Thus, contrary to what might be *a priori* thought, those of the second order are much more disposed to pass unfavourable judgment upon those of the third, than these latter are to censure them. The fact is, the higher Christian knows the real position in which his weaker brother is; and while he sees his failings, he respects his sincerity, and loves him for his master’s sake. He remembers how lately he himself was in the like bondage, and how, though thus bound, his heart was right with God. He calls to mind, also, the apostle’s charitable counsel—“We, then, that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” (Rom. xv. 1.) Seeing so much alloy in the half-formed Christian, he may, indeed, be tempted to rate him lower than he ought; but still he understands, and allows for, the good that is in him, and forms his estimate accordingly: while, on the other hand, the believer who is in dim light cannot discern or comprehend the graces which adorn his more gifted brother.

They are too spiritual for his sight—too subtile for his mental grasp. And thus it is that the babe in Christ is disposed, by an inversion of all order, to pass sentence without mercy upon the brother, who soars above him in brighter day. This temptation in the two classes—the one to despise, and the other to judge his brother—is pointed out by the apostle in the commencement of the 14th chapter to the Romans. I shall, therefore, conclude with a brief notice of that passage.

There were, in the church at Rome, when this epistle was addressed to them, two parties. The one, but partially acquainted with the nature of the Gospel, had scruples respecting meats and drinks; and sooner than run the risk of eating flesh that was unclean, or had been offered unto idols, confined themselves to herbs alone. Such was the case of those whom St. Paul describes as the weaker brethren. The others, more expanded in their views, and spiritual in their apprehensions, knew that the kingdom of heaven was not meat and drink: they knew that when the positive restraint was taken off, that in the nature of things, it was less than nothing in the sight of God—lighter than the dust in the scales in which the salvation of immortal souls was balanced—whether a man observed, or did not observe, trifles

utterly insignificant in themselves. They were troubled by no needless scruples, and eat indifferently what the providence of God might be pleased to furnish. Such were the two classes, in spirit and in relative position exactly corresponding to those which it has been the object of this little essay to describe. I shall, therefore, finish, with the wise counsel which the apostle gives respectively to these parties:—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him."

ESSAY XIII.

ON THE RISIBILITY OF MAN.

MAN has been defined to be a risible animal. And whether this be his *differentia essentialis* or no, it does not appear that any other animal exhibits any, the slightest, tendency to laughter. Amongst the various tribes of sentient beings

below us, we look in vain for any symptom of this propensity. And assuredly we cannot for a moment entertain the thought, that any of those orders of intelligences which are above us are subject, to what we instinctively feel to be below the level of their exalted natures. The idea of an angel's laughing, does violence to every pious sentiment of the mind. Man stands then here alone; he is the only risible being with whom we are acquainted, or of whom indeed we can form a conception. Nor is this phenomenon difficult to be accounted for. If the very essence of the ridiculous, or the laughable, be the strange combination, or incongruous mixture of things unsuitable and disproportionate to each other; then man is, in virtue of his compound nature, placed at a point of observation, where extremes meet together, and where the most heterogeneous elements embrace each other. Or rather he is himself the field on which the contrasts, and collisions of these antagonist principles, are displayed. Man is the link between the spiritual and material systems. He is, on the one hand, a mere animal, with all the gross propensities of flesh and blood; and, on the other hand, an immortal spirit, breathing after purer air, and panting for its native heaven, where alone it can find repose. That a being so placed and so consti-

tuted, must continually witness and exhibit extraordinary unions, and strange encounters of discordant principles, and thus, according to this hypothesis, often set in motion the risible propensities, cannot but result from the nature of the case. But it may be said that angels see these incongruities as well as we ; and why do they not produce such emotions in them ? To these I answer, that these exalted natures are, in all probability, above the reach of such excitement, and for this reason, namely, there must be something of sympathy between the subject and the object, or risibility can have no room for exercise. Thus we find that there is no surer scale by which we can measure the moral elevation, or depression of individual character, than the kind of things which excite their merriment. The practical joke which provokes the loud laughter of the populace, is stupidity itself to the intellectual mind. But let us consider for a moment, how much of the ridiculous palpably proceeds from the twofold nature of man. Why is it, that if you speak of an ox or a sheep thriving and fattening in its pasture, the object presents nothing comical or grotesque ? But if you are told of a man's eating some unusual meal, or by dint of good cheer swelling out to enormous dimensions, such a picture is almost sure at once, melancholy and

revolting as it is, to provoke a smile. And whence does this arise, but from the strange mixture in the same subject, of the grossness of the beast, with the dignity of the intellectual nature? And what proves that this incongruity is the source of the comical in this instance is, that the more you increase the contrast, and widen the interval, the more does the case become ridiculous. What is a more favourite subject of vulgar jesting or more sure to provoke uproarious laughter, than stories, seldom true, of clergymen degrading their sacred function, by some gross sensuality, or scandalous excess? And why is this? Because such instances exhibit what is high and holy, in combination with what is far lower than the life of beasts. Thus it is that "fools make a mock at sin," and that immortal man glories in his shame.

Now all this that I have been saying about the source of the ridiculous, would be but mere curious speculation, and idle theory, were it not that the same conjunction of what is high and low in our marvellous nature, is now the bitter root from whence so luxuriant a crop of woes, and sufferings spring. In man while innocent, it is true, an earthly body, and celestial spirit conjoined, and all was harmony and peace. The inferior nature was in willing subjection to the higher principle;

man was at unity in himself, and all his faculties moved in sweet accordance. But, in the disruption of his fall, the golden chain was broken, the cords which bound him to God and to himself were snapped asunder, and his nature became a ruin. To repair this ruin, a restorer and a deliverer was provided. He came that he might bring us back to God, and to more than the blessings we had lost. He can re-create the soul in the image of its Maker, and re-fashion its earthly tabernacle after the likeness of his own glorious body. Nevertheless, for this latter we must wait till the morning of the resurrection day. In the mean time, while sojourning in this house of clay, and in this mortal body, even the children of God are subject to great bondage. The spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak. The body is dead because of sin, even where the spirit is life because of righteousness. And it is this union of an immortal spirit with so unsuitable a companion, with a sinful, disordered, and dying body, it is this now unnatural combination in the same person, which constitutes much, if not the very essence, of man's probation. It is wonderful into what vast importance the alliance with a higher principle, elevates the mere animal portion of our compound being. Those instinctive propensities, which we share in common with the beasts, unsatisfied like

theirs with what nature spontaneously produces, or what the soil on which they tread provides, set the whole machinery of the world in motion. To furnish supplies for man's corporeal appetites not more numerous nor pressing than those of other animals, the most complicated laws are framed, nations treat with nations, mariners brave the ocean, science is enlarged and arts invented. If man ceased to require meat and drink, clothes to cover him, and a house to keep him from the cold, scarcely anything would remain which gives life to commerce, value to property, or existence to the elaborate institutions of society. It is out of the simple elements of man's mere physical wants that these mighty combinations and this vast machinery, in the midst of which we live, are formed; and all this in virtue of the union of a higher principle with this material body. All in virtue of the magic power and electric touch by which the divine spark impregnates the human animal, with some portion of the inherent dignity of a more exalted nature.

But if this celestial principle can raise its dull companion so far above its native sphere, the latter can re-act upon the spirit, and infect it with a catalogue of pains and diseases alien to its nature. These are, I conceive, the peculiar trials which grow out of our two-fold being. If we

were merely animals, then, in our fallen state, infirmity, decay, and death, would be at least a second nature. We should feel them as the beasts appear to do, as simple evils attended by no anticipations, no exaggerations of the fancy, no bitter remembrances, no painful contrasts, no ideal sufferings. But when an immortal spirit, deathless in its essence, against the native current of its instinctive tendencies, feels itself bound by chains which clog it with a companion strange and foreign and hastening to decay, but by an inscrutable allotment part of itself and forming one person with itself—this struggle between life and death, between a dying body and a deathless soul is what, I believe, lies at the root of sufferings as surely felt, as they are, to most, unaccounted for and hidden, respecting both their origin and their cause. They are not reasoned on, because few reflect on themselves, or ask themselves what they are. But human life is spent in endeavours to meet the difficulties, and palliate the evils which result from the union already adverted to. How much of learning and of arts are employed in relieving the mind from the miseries which bodily disease and pains inflict! What skill, what science, is called forth in the discovery and improvement of a locomotion by which the active soul may drag on its clod of earth, with increased

velocity ! This subject might be almost endlessly pursued. But I shall content myself with adding the two following observations :—

I. May not the trials which an immortal principle undergoes from its intimate alliance with a gross and perishing body, suggest to us some reflections calculated to elucidate the peculiar nature, of a part of those sufferings which the Son of God endured for us. If our mere spark of spiritual life feels so keenly the unnatural compression of its lodgment in this house of clay, what must have been the experience, what the mysterious, the incomprehensible sufferings of Him, in whose person dwelt all the Godhead bodily in the tabernacle of our flesh ! What strange companions embraced each other, what vast extremes were brought together in Him whose divine nature imparted infinitude not only to the merits, but to the sufferings of his life, and cross, and passion !

II. If this, “corruptible body often presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind,” let us not fret against our chains. Let patience have her perfect work. If at times we groan being burdened, let us comfort ourselves with the blessed thought, that we shall soon be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. Let it be our consolation that if

we feel this mortal flesh an incumbrance and a weight, the saints of God have felt it so in every age. And if our trials be the same, let us lay hold upon the same hope that they did. "I reckon," says St. Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

ESSAY XIV.

UNFAITHFULNESS AND INFIDELITY CONTRASTED.

"He hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

1 TIM. v. 8.

THESE words contain a most important truth, and pregnant principle. It is this: that to disobey the Gospel is worse than even to disbelieve the Gospel—that if "he that believeth not shall be condemned," he that owns God's authority, and tramples upon his laws, shall receive greater damnation. The apostle seems to speak of these

latter as a reproach and a contradiction to themselves, and in terms of the most indignant reprobation. "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn thou away." "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Again, he describes the judge of quick and dead as "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." I allow that, in the words immediately before us, St. Paul is comparing professing Christians with the surrounding heathens, and that the term "infidel" does not here, as in its ordinary present use, imply one who rejects the Gospel offered to him. It rather means one who never heard the joyful sound, and had consequently no opportunity of embracing it. It is true that the modern free-thinker, so called by a strange abuse of language, often claims affinity with the philosophers of the ancient schools. But there are no two classes of the human race perhaps more pointedly in contrast—the one breathing after some higher wisdom than their own to guide them, the other refusing to hear the voice of the wisdom that is from above; the one *a cloud by day*, the other *a pillar of fire by night*;

the one a light in the midst of darkness, the other groping in the noon-day as in the night: both resembling Gideon's fleece; but the one when there was "a dew on it alone, and it was dry on all the earth beside," the other when it was "dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground there was dew." How the apostle appreciated those heathen who ascended to the full height of their own dispensation, we learn from Romans ii. 14. "For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." And what was his comparative estimation of them, we find in the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses. "Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?" But even suppose my text to contemplate those who, having lived in regions of Gospel profession, refused their credence to the truth of Christianity, let us not be too hasty in pronouncing such to have been, in *every* instance, less excusable than the heathen. With us it is necessary to

make such gross and general classifications of mankind, as will place each member of the human family under one or other of these several heads or categories. And thus, speaking after the manner of men, we attribute to all who are born in Christian lands a responsibility, for which we do not think the heathen answerable. But to the infinite mind no such helps are wanting. God needs no general rules to guide him. He requires no distribution into ranks or classes to simplify his plans, to facilitate his movements, to methodize his agencies, or to secure his various and endless processes from entanglement or confusion. Each individual of the human family stands out before him in separation from all the rest. He knows the secret history, the chequered circumstances, the dependencies, bearings, and combinations which go to form the special position and the peculiar merits of the case of every soul, on which he passes his unerring judgment. Names and appearances are nothing with him. With reality alone he deals. And how far any man has or has not had the revelation of His will fairly placed before him, how far the light has reached the individual soul, so as to form the grounds of its condemnation if rejected, God alone can tell. And consequently, what nominal Christian is or is not accountable for more than heathens are, it

rests with the infallible mind, and with none but it, with certainty to determine. If one born in some land which names the name of Christ, but which teaches for his doctrines the commandments of men—which substitutes a gross and degrading superstition for the purity of heavenly truth—which gives to the simple appetites of the youthful mind for bread a stone, and for a fish a serpent—if in such a land, cruelty and oppression, assuming the name of the God of mercy, crown the whole by adding this dogma to the rest, that if a man does not believe what his better nature rises against, and what he therefore cannot believe, he must perish everlastingly—if, I say, one so placed as to be inevitably persuaded that this and nothing else is Christianity, throws off the incumbent weight, and dares to think and say, this cannot be a true revelation, this religion cannot be from God—who will say that such an individual comes within the contemplation of those awful words—“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world: and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil?”

The world of nominal Christians are, in their own estimation, staunch believers. But then their belief rests simply upon the ground of their never having asked themselves, whether Christi-

anity is true or no. They do not *think* sufficiently upon the subject even to call its truth in question. "They stagger not indeed at unbelief;" they are harassed by no misgivings; their faith is subject to no fluctuations; it is the same at all times; it strains not at gnats, for it can swallow camels; it finds all things equally easy of digestion; it can believe everything and anything, because, in fact, it believes nothing. Thus creeds are repeated; but the awful and tremendous articles of those creeds no more affect the course and current of the life, than do the shifting scenes, the watery creations, and gorgeous palaces of the clouds. The faith of the man of this world is a mere homage paid to the law—a mark of respect to the institutions of the country. It is not however mere pretence—it is not sheer hypocrisy. It is rather a convenient fancy, a kind of shadow of sincerity. So that one slight addition would form a suitable commencement of the popular creed. The repetition of the two first words might be adopted; and the instrument would stand thus: "I believe I believe," &c. &c. In fact, ordinary believers do not approach as near to faith, as do the doubts of him who is sometimes branded with the name of infidel. Some of the latter class I have known and pitied; and could not but contrast *their unbelief* with the *belief* of

those who cast out their name as evil. The one coldly assenting to truths, which the other would think it no less than heaven, unhesitatingly to receive. The one persuaded as to their understandings, but uninfluenced, unengaged, unaffected as to their hearts. The other tempted by a faltering judgment, to question what their hearts almost told them must be true. Will not such circumcision be counted by a merciful God for uncircumcision? And will not this “love of the truth,” at least, be owned as a far more acceptable offering, than that formal mockery which constitutes the faith of a faithless world? Which of the two, I conclude by asking, comes nearest to the spirit of the apostle’s meaning in these words—“Ye have obeyed *from the heart* that form of doctrine which was delivered you:”—“For *with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness?” Both fall short; but the question here is—which of them falls shortest?

ESSAY XV.

THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT DISPENSATION.

AMONGST the various arguments for the personal advent, or at least for the intervention of some new agencies to bring about a state of

holiness and happiness upon earth, the following is, I confess, of no small weight with me. I have in a late volume urged some other proofs upon the subject, and shall now confine myself to this one. Have we, then, I say, with the social materials which the present dispensation offers, any thing but a choice of evils—either, on the one hand, unity guaranteed by slavery, or, on the other hand, liberty abused, and consequent division and disorder? If we would have unity, how is it to be obtained? Is it possible that men, various as are their judgments in all other departments of knowledge and of conduct, should be of one mind upon the most enlarged and comprehensive subject, which can come before the human understanding? And if they are not so, how is their adherence to any system, or their submission to any spiritual authority, to be secured? You will say each individual should submit to the voice of the church? But what if he refuse to hear the church? Then he will expose himself to ecclesiastical censures. Granted. But suppose he is utterly regardless of these censures. Suppose he meets the threat of being excluded from the means of grace, and denied the sacraments, with saying that there is a purer administration of them out of the church, or that he esteems them beggarly elements, and the mere mummeries of

priestcraft. What if he anticipates her excommunication by excommunicating himself? I cannot conceive what there is, in this case, to preserve this contumacious person within the pale of the church's power, or to prevent his spreading the infection of his licentiousness, but the bringing in the aid of the secular arm. And then what becomes of liberty of conscience? If a man is fined, imprisoned, or put to death, or if he be a sufferer in his business, or injured in his property, by his religious opinions, there has been a denial to that man of the free exercise of his judgment. His religion is not his choice, but a thing imposed upon him by the same kind of power, as that which forces him to pay the most odious and oppressive tax. This system prevails, and is fully carried out in some countries; and *there* you have unity. But it is a unity which is nothing more nor less than spiritual slavery. In fact, the church can have but two kinds of authority, now that miracles have ceased. The one, that of mild persuasion; the other, that of physical force: the one a power over the mind, of a spiritual and moral nature; the other a power over the body, that of mere brute force. The latter may be much aided, or rather may be saved the trouble of interference, by gross ignorance. It requires but a "scourge of small cords" to drive a whole herd

of swine; and thus the slightest crack of the church's whip can move whole human masses who assimilate to the swine. More vigorous intellects must be handed over to the secular arm, to be beaten with many stripes, or to be dealt with by whatever means may be most effectual, to prevent them from disturbing the slumbers of the church. Such is the picture which a part of Christendom presents. And what is presented by the other part? In those regions where the right of private judgment—and a glorious theory it is—fully prevails, is there anything very encouraging to meet our view? *There* the principle is adopted, and surely it is one to which every honest heart responds, that no church has, or, from the nature of the thing, can have, any legitimate power but that of argument and reason; and consequently can require no obedience but what men are willing to concede. Well, then, if we believe that Christ has really established a church on earth, if we believe that Christianity is true, that it is important to man's well-being, and instrumental to man's salvation; is full liberty of conscience is the unshackled right of private judgment, productive of such fruits, as the believer in the Gospel, and the friend of souls would desire to see? For an answer to this question let us look abroad, and see the wild extravagances, the

strange inventions, the heresy, the bare-faced infidelity, into which the mind, when allowed free exercise, has run. Let us look at home, and see what samples England herself produces of those fruits which grow upon the tree of religious liberty. It will, perhaps, be said, "You cannot judge of things by the abuse of them. If all men were what they ought to be, there might be liberty without licentiousness, and unity without coercion." But this really is no defence. You might as well defend the character of a physician by saying, "Let all his patients come to him in perfect health, and then you will see how successfully he practises." The point is, what is to make all men what they ought to be? If it be meant that the church, under the present dispensation, is to bring about this state of individual perfection, this supposition, I say, begs the question, and assumes the point at issue. It takes for granted that the church can effect, what it is the object of this paper to prove it cannot effect. Or, if this consummation, so devoutly to be wished, can take place independently of the church, then, the fact is, the Church of Christ is a thing which the world could do quite well without. For if, apart from its influence and authority, men could become morally good, what is this to say but that men may first be saved, and then come to the

church for salvation, if they please. No. The thing to be considered is, whether the existing hindrances to the general prevalence of true religion are accidental, and removable by such appliances as the present dispensation can administer; or whether these obstacles are inherent in the dispensation itself, and whether that which “now letteth will let, until” new agencies are set in motion, and a new order of things arises. This important question, I should almost say, has been already answered. It has been put to the test of actual experiment. The present dispensation has had a long trial. And while under it multitudes of individual souls have been saved—saved to the uttermost in spite of, nay, by the operation of, the pressure from without; yet, as an instrument for converting society to God, the Christian Church has signally failed hitherto, and seems to show no signs of better things to come. The Spirit of God is, indeed, moving upon the face of these dark waters; and his angels are gathering together his elect from the four quarters of the heavens. Nay, the iniquity which abounds does not damp, but stimulate into still more energetic life and action, the immortal spark, which the author of their salvation has lodged within their breasts. The tares, amongst which this imperishable seed is sown, can serve only to deepen its

roots and expand the luxuriance of its growth. For to those who are in the hands of God, trials and temptations are but gifts and blessings; and all winds that blow combine to waft them to the haven of their eternal rest. I do not deny that the visible church has, on the whole, progressed in extent of territory. But what I speak of is advance in collective and national exhibitions, of the power of the Christian life. *Here* it is that I think the system has been, in point of fact, a failure. For assuredly, after centuries of fluctuation, of faint lights and dark shades, the church at times, in some favoured spots, ascending into purer air, and then sinking down to the level of the world, or even below the world; the church thus flowing up with perturbed waters to the present times, presents anything but the appearance of a system predestined to advance, by slow but sure degrees, from a state of weakness to that of strength and ultimate perfection. No; it offers, as I have said, no picture to the view but that of freedom abused, and liberty run wild, or of a unity of bondage and of fear, the lying semblance and dark shadow of what it pretends to be. It is true that, in the midst of all this confusion and disorder, a remnant has been left. But these are but the bright stars which appear in the darkness of the church's night. The question is, when and

how the day is to burst upon our view? Is it that these stars are to multiply and brighten, so as to "turn the shadow of death into the morning?" Or is it that the Sun of Righteousness is to arise with healing in his wings, and to scatter the mist of night before it? Is the long-wished-for period of the world's regeneration and of man's true happiness to come from an improvement of the present dispensation, or from a radical change in the administration of God's government here below? On the grounds which I have taken in these remarks, I believe the latter. I believe that the old world, like the "old man," is incapable, by any conceivable process, or by any possible transition, of becoming what God pronounced his primeval works to be—"good." I believe that it is doomed to die, and on its ruins an order of things, after God's own heart, to rise. And, in addition to what I have here or elsewhere said, I would suggest two arguments. 1st, Though the Spirit of God, inwardly working, may advance individual souls to high degrees of purity and happiness, society, from its very nature, requires something which can present itself as a common object to the eyes of many; something, consequently, not wholly spiritual, to draw it collectively, and as a body, to the same centre. Without this there can be no unity. And such

common attraction there cannot be, without the intervention of some higher external objects than those which are merely human. Let that agency be angelic, or let it be the re-appearance upon this earth of the saints which sleep in Jesus, or let it be (may God hasten that day) the visible display of Christ in glory—some exhibition to man of a power above the level of his nature, I believe, in the very constitution of things, to be essentially and indispensably necessary to marshal the mixed multitudes of the human race, “treading as they are one upon another,” into concord, unity, and order. 2nd, Startling as it may appear to some, I am constrained to think that the present dispensation, the world as it is, and with no other elements than it now contains, has bound up in its essential constitution a leaven of sin. It is constructed upon this principle; and the calculations of its Divine Disposer are made in reference to, and in the anticipation of, the entrance of evil into the working of the system. “It must needs be,” says our Saviour, “that offences come.” And “let both grow together until the harvest,” is his reply to those who would sever the evil from the good. And this expressly, because the removal of the tares might injure, nay destroy, the process by which the wheat was maturing to perfection. Remove all emulation, all desire of

distinction for distinction's sake, from our seats of learning ; banish every spark of high-mettled feeling from our fleets and armies ; let every one, from the highest to the lowest, be dead to all the splendour of life, and find no stimulus in the glittering prizes of ambition ; and, in my opinion, the wheels of society would stop. There would be no hands to work the machinery of the world. Indeed there seems to be something unnatural in such a state of things. We should have what Tom Paine calls a *drab-coloured* world—it would be like a great convent. I do not believe that man, or any other intelligence, is designed for such a tame existence. All we are told of heaven is quite different. All *there* is life, and exhilaration, and pleasure—scenes of delight and glorious exhibition. If, then, this world is ever to be transfigured into an image of that heaven, I cannot think that the Almighty will withdraw all its present brilliancy and excitements, and leave nothing but a vacuum in their place. Indeed I doubt that the human mind is so constituted that it could, in the absence of all sin to stimulate its vigilance, and of all virtuous attractions to engage it from without, hold on its way as if none but God and itself filled the whole circle of existence. Assuredly that gracious Being did not act as if it were his will to absorb every faculty of the soul,

when He placed man amidst the beauteous scenes of paradise, and sent him an help-meet, because "it was not good for him to be alone." What, then, do these things argue, but that, if this earth is ever to clear up into a field of holiness and happiness, a suitable instrumentality will be provided? Man's inherent and instinctive love of sublimity and grandeur, of brilliancy and beauty, will be abundantly gratified. Scenes will be opened which will throw the tawdry vanities and tarnished glories of this present dispensation into entire eclipse. Spectacles such as once were seen, songs such as once were heard upon the plains of Bethlehem, will be the delights of every day. These will be the *public amusements* of happier days. Angels and saints in glory will often come down, fresh from heaven, and talk to us familiarly of all that is transacted there. And, above all, and without which the whole scene would want that sunshine which alone can gladden the heart, the Saviour himself will establish his throne of righteousness amongst men. In what form, in what mode of exhibition, he may re-appear in this earth, which in the days of his flesh he trod in suffering and sorrow, we know not, neither, perhaps, have we faculties to know. Some of the effects of this glorious advent we are, nevertheless, expressly told. "He shall come down like

rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed."

ESSAY XVI.

ON ANTEPASTS OF THE FUTURE STATE.

THAT one blind from his birth can have no idea of light and colours, is a point almost universally agreed upon; and this at least I am sure of, that if he had, there is no possible means by which he could convey the knowledge of that fact to us. Indeed it must be a thing hidden to himself as well as others. We know, however, that in the dark we have often the most vivid perceptions of colour; we know also that a concussion of the head, which violently affects the optic nerves, will

produce the sensation of a flash of fire. Thus the idea of light and colours may be present to the mind, when nothing has been painted upon the retina of the eye. And that the blind may often, by some accidental means, be the subject of such impressions, is, I think, from the nature of the case, highly probable. But suppose one unblessed with sight, by a sudden stroke upon the head, to have a bright and clear display of light and colours, how could he suspect what the nature of this perception was? He would know that he had felt something unusually exciting: but there would be nothing to guide him to the conclusion, or even to excite the suspicion, that these were the things which persons around him understood by the terms of light and colours. There would be no common standard to which he could refer them; no means by which he could compare his impressions with those of others; and thus he might be well acquainted with visible phenomena, without knowing what they were, or by what name to call them.

In the same way, it has sometimes struck me, that we may have glimpses and transient foretastes of the life to come, which nevertheless, from the very same causes as operate in the instance of the blind, we can neither point out to sympathetic witnesses, or even, if I may use the

expression, identify ourselves. I do not here speak of the spiritual communion of the soul with God, nor of the devotional aspirations of the heart to Him. In acts of direct religion, the wall of partition is thrown down, and heaven and earth are one. In our more immediate approaches to that God who fills both worlds, we stand on ground which is common to the Church above and to the Church below. In such acts we know and are sure that "this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Hence, I cannot help observing, that many persons are disposed to place the main distinction between our present and our future state, in the very thing in which that distinction least consists. Not having themselves "tasted of the heavenly gift, nor of the powers of the world to come," they have no earnest "of the inheritance of the saints in light;" they know not the life and spirit of those words in which the Church below re-echoes the high worship of the Church above: "Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name; evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy." They have no foretaste or anticipation of that which is the very soul of future blessedness; and therefore their own experience can bear no testimony to the fact, that the

substance of heaven commences here. They look then for a change—not in degree, but in kind—where no such change can be. They have some vague and floating notion that their happiness will consist in the meridian glory of that light from whose early dawning they instinctively turn away; in an overflowing flood of those spiritual joys for which they have neither taste nor relish; in genuflexions before the footstool of that God from whose presence they fly, and with whose nature their hearts are at enmity, here below.

Such is the strange fatuity of earthly minds; they “err because they know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God.” They have not experienced that great renewal which translates the soul from the darkness of its natural state, into the dawning of a never-ending day. They lose sight of the solemn truth that the soul, before and after death, remains the same;—that if we worship God in spirit and in truth, the substance of that worship, whether in the body or out of the body, is all one;—that if He who called the light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, it is the same sun as that which warms, and cheers, and gladdens, with still brighter beams, the souls of the faithful in their blessed abodes.

Again, it is a part of the same false system, to exclude from our notions of heaven all those accidents,

those secondary qualities, or lesser properties, in which, nevertheless, the difference between heaven and earth does mainly and essentially consist. All these they reject as visionary, fanciful and presumptuous speculations. Resolving everything into an all-absorbing expectation of the beatific vision, they feel and reason as if the Deity were in reality some material glory, some localized object to which we could point one another's attention, and say, "There is God." In spite of all such vain delusions, I believe that the happiness of heaven will consist, not merely in increased degrees of spiritual joy, and in intenser exercises of direct religion, but in circumstances of another nature, and in pleasures of another kind. And of these it is, I suspect, that we may have glimpses and prelibations, of whose real meaning and character we are ourselves unconscious.

There is a natural, as well as a moral, heaven ; pleasures at God's right hand for the glorified body, no less than for the spirits of the just made perfect. Of pleasures of the former class I now speak, and of these I often feel as if we had some strange foretastes here. How far, indeed, they may be merely corporeal, or how far partly mental, I do not say. The characteristic distinction does not lie there ; that is not the point. What I

principally mean is, that though pure and peaceful, and associated with calmer scenes than earth, they are not in their nature moral. There is a peace passing all understanding, which, without any conscious reference to religion, is to the soul like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. This peace is, of course, intimately connected with the felt repose of the heart in God; indeed none but those who are reconciled to the divine nature could, by possibility, feel it. Still what I now speak of is rather a natural than a devotional experience. It is rather physical than moral. It is an ineffable stillness, a silence and a calm, as if all things in heaven and earth were calm and silent as ourselves. It is of the essence of this repose that we feel ourselves in sympathy with what we cannot define; in contact, or rather union, with infinitude; lost, and at the same time intimately at home, in the bosom of eternity.

There are also rare and felicitous moments, in which the face of nature and the features of the landscape seem as if touched with some mysterious enchantment. It is not that they are purer then, or calmer, or more worthy of the hand that formed them, than they are wont to be. It is true that the fairest scenes may, at times, be clothed in brighter hues, and present finer contrasts of light

and shade, than they can permanently and invariably exhibit. Still, the change I speak of is not in the object, but in the percipient mind : it is not in the picture, but in the eye : it is not in the world around, but in the world within. I am convinced, that were our minds and bodies in their primeval health and purity, we should need no other paradise than that which the hand of nature spreads before us. How often do we feel a melancholy consciousness of this ! How often do the brightest sunshine, the purest streams, the luxuriance of the richest foliage, and the fragrance of the sweetest flowers, seem to speak of, and to invite us to, a vividness of enjoyment which nevertheless we do not realize ! The birds, as they float in the air, reproach us with the sluggish load of flesh which locates us to earth. The wild flowers on which we tread, have a voice to tell us that we have lost the simplicity which we so admire in them ; that they are what God has made them, while we are what sin has made us. This is a language which the heart at least can fully understand. In short, we feel instinctively that there is a something wanting, not in outward objects, but in ourselves, to realize that intense and unalloyed enjoyment of pure nature, of which imagination can paint such lively pictures. Nevertheless, there are moments when we seem as if we

grasped this fleeting image, and stayed its flight. There have been verdant spots upon the path of life, when we have been favoured by bright skies and fanned by the softest breath of heaven; when health has spread enchantment through the frame, and every pulse of life has throbbed with pleasure,—at such moments there has been a vivid enjoyment of the scenes around us, a healthful appetite for the feast which nature's hand has spread, which seems rather to anticipate “what we shall be,” than rightly to belong to the state in which we are. These things can be felt, but not described; and it is to experience alone that I can appeal for the reality of their existence. But though they be matters of feeling only, nothing can be more reasonable than the thought, that the highest pitch of physical enjoyment here, may approximate very closely to what we shall experience in the world to come. Suppose the mind at peace with God and man—the soul in deep tranquillity and filled with joyful hopes; nay, assured, no less than of its own existence, that it will be well with it for ever,—what then could be wanting to the completion of our happiness? Simply this: that this *mens sana* should be *in corpore sano*. We want bodies suited to these souls. We want pure, active, healthful bodies, incapable of pain, of gross propensities, of languor, sickness, or

decay. We want bodies as lightsome as their spiritual tenants could desire ; aids, and not hindrances, to the freest motions of the soul ; not drags and drawbacks and temptations to the immortal mind, but healthful channels through which streams of refreshment, life, and joy, pour in upon it. If then there are peculiar moments at which we feel the present body, as it were, transfigured into a new existence, is there anything irrational in supposing that these moments may be glimpses of the coming day ;—antepasts of what the soul will feel when “ clothed upon with our house which is from heaven ? ”

But it may be said, How can our purest relish of what is here presented, be an actual foretaste of joys hereafter, when all these things shall be dissolved, and consequently our celestial senses, whatever they may be, can have no such objects to exercise themselves upon ? But what, I answer, if things below correspond with such fine accordance to things above, that all that is fair, and pure, and lovely around us here, pictures forth and reflects, as from the glassy surface of a lake, the new heavens and the new earth ? It would follow thence, that the pleasures which the former impart, are so far counterparts of what the latter yield, that when the enjoyment of nature is wrought up to its highest pitch, it vibrates and

thrills in unison with the sensations which are experienced in the contemplation of celestial objects. But a simpler and directer solution of this difficulty might be proposed. Is there not much to favour the idea—I had almost said to encourage the hope, (to me, at least, it is a delightful one)—that death will not wholly eject us from the world we now inhabit? Indeed, the instinctive thirst we feel for a freer and fuller enjoyment of its beauties, than we can realize here below, is of itself no slight ground for thinking that this call of nature will at length be satisfied. If the longing after immortality be considered as an argument for the deathless being of the soul; if through all creation the principle seems to run that for every appetite which God has formed, He has provided also a connatural supply, is it consistent with the general analogy of things, that we should have been taught by nature to yearn after a fruition which is to have no existence but in such evanescent glimpses as only mock the appetite and tantalize the heart? Has the earth been so clothed with beauty that it may waste its sweetness on the desert air? Has God so gloriously furnished this ample theatre, and are there no spectators but those who can bestow upon it a few sickly glances only, and then withdraw from it for ever? Are there no intelligent eyes to con-

temple those displays of nature in all its luxuriance and glory, which are spread out in her deeper solitudes, or in lands which none but half human footsteps tread? It requires no elaborate reasoning to be assured, that this cannot be the case. There is no such waste in God's creation. For such exhibitions there must be suitable spectators. And who these are, at least who the most delighted of these spectators are, we can scarcely doubt. Angels may desire to look upon these things. We know that when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." And may we not hence conclude, that these exalted beings continue to contemplate with delight scenes whose first formation caused such gratulations in the courts of heaven? Still, to *human* spectators, to those who once trod these paths below, oppressed with cares, and sins, and sorrows;—to those who sighed as they travelled on, and saw how calm and lovely simple nature was, and how it offered, to lighter hearts and purer appetites than theirs, pleasures which they were not in a capacity to taste;—to those spirits, once in prisons of flesh and blood, how transporting must be the sense that their bodies are now as pure and free as the freshest incense which nature breathes! With what new delight may they expatiate amidst

scenes which they now can relish with a vividness which realizes all that the imagination once conceived of bliss ! And beauteous as this earth may often seem to us, yet what glorious apparel may it put on when beheld by immortal eyes ! We know how the microscope can transfigure the meanest atom, or coarsest particle, into a splendour which no art can imitate. What, then, may this globe appear, when seen with eyes which as far exceed our grosser vision, as the celestial body transcends the clod of earth in which the soul was once confined !

These are delightful thoughts, as they respect our personal interests, and our future prospects. But there are other points of view in which they are cheering to the heart, and pleasant to the soul. How full of comfort is the belief that departed friends are joint spectators with ourselves of the face of nature ; and that they contemplate with delight the rising and the setting suns, the morning as it breaks upon the mountains, and the evening as it shadows forth the calm and peace of heaven ! How sweet, how consolatory, to one who has lost the companion of his walks, still in those walks to think that that beloved friend is not regardless of the scenes he once so much enjoyed—that he has even a higher relish of them than he had before—nay, that so

far from losing his interest in them, he now claims an ownership, to which in the days of his flesh he could urge no title. Thus while we survey the varied field of nature, we can call our friend to remembrance, and take comfort from the thought that now he

“Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety which none can feel,”

who are burdened in this tabernacle of flesh and blood.

There is a pleasure *sui generis*, of which, though hard to describe, we all are conscious; and which is, as I believe, anticipatory of the life to come. If eternity differ from time simply in degree, the one being terminable and the other not, then indeed all such notions fall to the ground. But if the great distinction be that in time existence is doled out to us by little and little, but that in eternity we shall have a fulness of being and all united, then it would follow that whatever now seems to bring distant things, whether of time or space, unexpectedly together, must so far anticipate our future life. Indeed it would be hard to say why we are susceptible of this pleasure, unless it be that our natures are formed with an adaptation to that state in which things separated here

will be joined together. To a friend who was on a visit to me lately from a distant neighbourhood, I said in one of our rides ; “ Now if, from this spot, you were suddenly to obtain a view of your own locality, would you not feel an indescribable impulse of delight ? would it amount to less than transport ? ” What then, I say, is to account for this enchantment of the mind ? My friend had no such pleasure in looking at his own residence when at home. Why then feel such an ecstasy at the sight, if obtained in ways forbidden by the present laws of nature ? Is it from an instinctive preference of disorder ? Is it from a desire that the established course of things should be interrupted, merely for the sake of interruption ? No : by no means. It is because the soul of man is here in a state of unnatural compression. It is not now in its congenial element : it pants for an enlargement of its being. Separation and dispersion are against the current of its native tendencies. It is formed for unity. It yearns after that fuller and more perfect condition of life in which its treasures will be no more scattered, nor dealt out to it with a parsimonious hand ; but in which all that the heart desires will be brought together and presented to it at one view. This it is which lies at the root of the peculiar delight which my friend experienced at the thought of

recognizing his own home, in a locality from which it was in reality so far removed.

This instinctive longing accounts for many emotions, which we all have felt, without perhaps ever asking ourselves why we feel them. Why is it, for instance, that when we stand upon some elevated ground, we strain our eyes and feel such anxiety to discover the most distant points we can; and if we catch the faintest glimpse of some remote and well-known spot, rejoice as if we had gained some costly prize? Why is it that we take such pleasure in that rapid locomotion which brings distant places as it were in contact with each other? Why does the sight of a person, or even an inanimate object, from some far corner of the earth, at times produce associations of thought so interesting to the mind? All these are, I believe, resolvable into the fact that we are formed for a state of being in which things here dispersed, will be gathered into one. Whatever then brings distant objects near, touches the springs of anticipation within the soul.

And as it is with space, so it is with time. But these emotions are so evanescent that it is hard to arrest them as they fly, and still harder to retain them while we point them out to others. Yet who has not felt a sense of exquisite delight when at any time past events, early scenes, and

by-gone days have recurred, with such a vividness as to bring him into a kind of union with his former self? I can appeal only to the experience of my readers on this matter. I have myself known one who felt a secret charm in connecting his present with his former prayers; and particularly with those which he offered up in the freshness and ardour of his first admission into marvellous light. Those prayers, as they naturally would, turned upon the point that he might keep the treasure he had found, and that God, who had caused his sun to rise upon his soul, would never suffer it to go down in darkness. After many long years had intervened, this person experienced a delight which no language could convey, when these petitions came so vividly to his mind as to vibrate with the vows he then was offering: and when he felt that the dews which now refreshed his soul, were but the exhalations which had ascended in the early morning of his religious life, and were now returning.

As a curious illustration, and I would say confirmation, of the principles set forth in this paper, I would conclude by transcribing a passage from the letter of a distinguished naval officer. The extract which was shown to me begins thus abruptly. "I tumbled into the water, and not knowing how to swim, all my efforts to lay hold

of the boat were fruitless. With the vain attempts to make myself heard, I had swallowed much water, and I sank below the surface. I had been too much absorbed by alternate hope and fear, to mark the succession of events very accurately; not so the circumstances which immediately ensued. My mind had then undergone the sudden revolution, which to you appears so remarkable, and which you desire to have described. They are now vividly fresh in my memory, as if they had occurred but yesterday. From the moment that exertion had ceased, which I imagine was immediately consequent on complete suffocation, a calm feeling of the most perfect tranquillity succeeded the previous tumultuous sensations. It might be called apathy, certainly not resignation; for dying no longer appeared to me an evil; and I no longer thought of being rescued, nor was I in any bodily pain. On the contrary, my feelings were rather of a pleasurable cast, and may perhaps be not unaptly compared to that dull, but satisfactory, state which precedes the sleep produced by fatigue. Though the senses were deadened, the activity of the mind seemed to be invigorated and excited in a ratio which defies all expression; and thought succeeded thought with a rapidity which is not only indescribable, but probably inconceivable, by

any one who has not himself been in a similar situation. The course of these thoughts I can now in a great measure trace. The event that had just taken place, the awkwardness that had produced it, the bustle it caused on board, the effect it would have on the most affectionate father, the manner he would disclose it to the rest of the family, and a thousand other circumstances associated with home, were the first series of thoughts that occupied me ; but they soon took a wider range. The events of the last cruise and a preceding one—a former shipwreck—the school where I had been educated, and up to all my boyish adventures and earliest pursuits. Thus travelling backwards in time, every past incident glanced across my mind in retrograde succession ; not however in mere outline as here stated, but the picture filled up with every collateral feature : in short, my whole life seemed to be placed before me in a kind of panoramic review, and each act of it was accompanied by a consciousness of right and wrong, or by reflections on its causes and consequences. Indeed many trifling affairs which had been long forgotten, then crowded into my recollection with a sort of recent familiarity. May we not infer that, in the prolonged instant in which all this took place, there is a faint indica-

tion of the almost infinite power of memory with which we are to awaken hereafter, and thus be enabled or compelled to contemplate our past life? Or might it not almost warrant the startling idea, that death is only a change or modification of our existence, in which there is no real pause or interruption? It is remarkable that the innumerable ideas that rushed into my mind were (with the exception of the outset about the feelings of my family) all retrospective. Yet I had been brought up religiously. My hopes and fears for the next world had lost nothing of their early strength; and at any other period, the most intense interest, or the most awful anticipation, would have been excited by the mere probability that I was standing on the threshold of Eternity—yet in that inexplicable moment, when I had a full confidence that I had crossed it, not a single thought wandered into the future. I was wrapt entirely in the past. The length of time that was occupied in this deluge of thoughts, or rather the shortness of time into which they were compressed, I am unable to state with precision; but certainly two minutes could not have elapsed from the moment of suffocation to my being hauled up. And I have always believed that, in being hauled up, my consciousness terminated:

whilst I was being restored to animation, my feelings were painfully the reverse of those I have described."

I have been told that this account has appeared in some periodical: it may not therefore be new to many of my readers. To some, however, it doubtless will; and as I had the copy of the above from a very authentic source, I give it here. It is remarkable that within these few days I have heard of two similar cases: two instances of persons who continued under water till every effort to emerge had ceased; and to whose minds, at that moment, the whole of their past life reappeared and was present at one view.

ESSAY XVII.

ON A PRONENESS TO THINK OURSELVES DE- SPISED.

"CORRUPTIO optimi pessima," is a saying of pregnant import. Nor can any truth be more universal, or unfailing, than that all things, in proportion to their intrinsic excellence, are capable, when they degenerate, of a corresponding debasement. The inert and sapless stone, in its decomposition and decay, undergoes no noxious

or offensive process. Not so the luxuriant plant, the fruits and flowers that fill the air with fragrance, and clothe the fields with beauty. Not so the finer organizations and nobler developments of animal life; not so the human form divine; not so the immortal soul, invisible as its structure and its ruins may be to eyes of flesh. These all, in proportion to their dignity and worth, present, in their corruption, exhibitions loathsome to the senses, or revolting to the mind. The putrifying vegetable we turn from in disgust: from the animal, and most of all the human animal, we fly with instinctive horror. Further we cannot go,—for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,” how appalling must be the exhibition of a lost soul; the temple of the Holy Ghost in ruins, the image of God disfigured and defaced.

It is in virtue of this great principle that those very spirits which thirst after the fullest draughts of happiness, are prone to sink down into depths of depression, to which others are comparatively strangers. Such are the penalties which those must pay, who are in a peculiar manner fitted for purer air, for brighter skies, and softer scenes. They feel at every pore, and shrink from the rude contacts of such a world as this. It is true, that when such gentler spirits are brought to recognize

the Shepherd's call, and when their ears are opened to hear that voice which says, "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;"—they feel a peace which passeth all understanding; they lie down in green pastures, and repose by stillest waters. Still however they have their treasure, in vessels too refined to bear the assaults and shocks which flesh is heir to. In truth, "if in this life only they had hope, they were of all men most miserable." But it is not merely that the keen susceptibilities of such minds give a sharper edge to all their outward trials. Their besetting temptation is to conjure up ideal trials, which exist alone in the fertile chambers of imagery within. Breathing in an uncongenial element, minds like these often become partially distempered, and subject to a morbid action which fancies and gives shape to things which in reality have neither a local habitation nor a name. One instance of this I proceed to mention.

It will be admitted that spirits naturally of a finer mould, more delicate in their tastes and vulnerable in their apprehensions, than common souls, especially if they be sublimated and attenuated by true religion, cannot be in sympathy with the world around. They are not interested by, nor are they interesting to, the myriads that rush

along the streets and lanes of this great Babylon. Theirs is, as far as interchange of the heart can go, in a great measure a life of solitude, only the more intense, because they are in felt contact with the crowd : with those who are of one heart and of one soul, who give to one another the right hand of fellowship, and like Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, are confederated together.

Now I believe it often happens that a child of God is, on the whole, regarded and respected by that society in the centre of which he is living thus all alone. I do not mean that he is respected for that which is nearest to his heart, and constitutes him peculiarly what he is. No :—holiness can never be suitable to the palate of an impure world. We know how it dealt with Him who was abstract perfection, spotless purity, and essential goodness, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. Nevertheless, I believe that the pious man is often, for the sake of those amiable qualities which bear upon society, and for his offices of Christian kindness, the object, on the whole, of much affection and esteem. I believe also, that a certain awe of his character keeps even those who love him, at a distance from him. This, however, his humility and self-distrust often mistake for aversion and contempt. His insulated

position leaves him, on this point, entirely to his own reflections. He has no one to consult upon the subject. The familiarity which the children of this world have with one another, he has not with a single soul. Often, while he sits in solitary places, is he disposed to say with Job, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me" (Job xix. 13, 14); and with the Psalmist, "Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me: thou hast made me an abomination unto them. I am shut up, and I cannot come forth." (Ps. lxxxviii. 8.) "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me." (cxlii. 4.)

I remember one—and one who bore the image of the heavenly as brightly perhaps as fallen humanity can do—who told me that in former times his heart would almost die within him, when he sat alone and thought that the world was neglecting him, that no one felt with *him*, and that *he* could, in matters of common interest, feel with no one. He told me that he felt as if he wanted the distinctive marks and features of his kind, as if he were something scarcely human, as if he were not above but below the level of his species. And often, he said, he was tempted to apply to himself

these words of Agur, " Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man."

But " all things work together for good to them that love God." And I am convinced that this proneness to imagine ourselves looked down upon and despised ; that this morbid humility, mixed, as it often is, with a subtile secret and unmortified pride, may be overruled to the benefit of the soul. The very essence of man's salvation, is conformity to the image of a lowly Saviour. To know the fellowship of his sufferings, to be made conformable unto His death, and to be crucified with Him to this present evil world, this is the mystical baptism through which the soul must pass, if it would see the light of life, and be partaker of a joyful resurrection. But it is not in outward circumstances that the believer's true assimilation to Christ consists. A man may be poor as this world's destitution can make him ; but if he be proud in spirit, this is no true conformity to the poverty of Christ. A man may be avoided and shunned by all his natural associates ; but if this be the mere reaction of his own imperious tempers and repulsive habits, and moreover, if their avoidance of him inflict no wounds upon his heart, this is altogether wide of the mark of conformity to Him who felt in the bitterness of his soul that his

friends had deserted Him, and his disciples had forsaken Him in the extremity of his distress. In like manner, if a man be ever so much despised, and ever so much the object of contempt; yet if he be unaware of this; if he fancy, as is not unfrequent in such a case, that he is highly thought of, nay much respected; or if he can with brazen front pay back scorn for scorn—this is again no planting in the likeness of Christ's humiliation. Nevertheless, according to that pattern we must be formed. How then does the case stand? Christ was despised and rejected of men; nay, He is emphatically set forth as "Him whom man despiseth." And we must, in this as in other particulars, "drink of the cup that He drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with." But often it will happen, as I have said before, that the child of God will be, on the whole, the object of respect rather than contempt to those around him. "His light may so shine before men that they may see his good works," "and glorify God in him." It may be for the benefit of those with whom his lot is thrown that it should be so. Is he therefore to be a loser in so essential a matter, by their gain, and to be deprived of his portion in the fellowship of the abasement of the Son of God? May not then, I

say, his proneness to *think* himself despised, even where the direct opposite is the fact—may not his great weakness in this respect—may not the errors of his humility—may not the false pictures which the imaginings of one thus poor in spirit draw, be overruled to his great and endless comfort? I am persuaded that they often are. I am convinced that the solitary saint, the insulated being, who, however mistakenly, fancies that all look down upon him, that the world despises him, and that he is the object of his neighbour's scorn,—that from that very delusion he often reaps the richest fruits. It gives him food for earnest prayer, and subject matter for communion with God. It sends him to the great Physician, who alone can heal his distemper, and bind up his wounds. It impels him to a throne of grace, to pray without ceasing for humility—humility by which he can lie so low as to escape the blasts of scorn—which can teach the proud heart to be contented to be despised—which can make us feel that the lowest room that can be assigned to us is better than our due, is a far higher place than we deserve. It constrains us to supplicate Him who can lay the axe to the root of the tree, who can extirpate that secret vanity which gives its sting to the proud man's contumely, and to the world's contempt.

In a word, it drives us to the cross to learn of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart,” and there to “find rest unto our souls.”

Nor is this the only instance in which our own inward misgivings, our vain imaginings and groundless fears may be made to work together for our own good. I believe that in the case of those who lead a more interior life, God in his mercy often causes the *fear* of evils to administer the corrective chastening, that the evils themselves are employed in other instances to carry out. Thus, if the loss of friends be in its nature calculated to wean us from the world, I believe that the timid and anxious mind, the spirit which is “over-exquisite to shape the fashion of uncertain ill,” the too fond heart which in every trifling ailment, in every change of look, in every transient flutter of the pulse, in every wind that visits the face of one much loved too roughly, sees the first symptom or distant approaches of that which may increase and gather strength, to lay that idol in the dust—the man so constituted, I say, will often derive, from these fears, all the discipline, and all the weaning from earth, and all the persuasives to cast himself upon God, that he could derive from the actual realization of those fears. It is thus with the person who is morbidly and painfully watchful of his own health, and harassed

by the thought of imaginary diseases. It is thus with the man who is careful about many things, and who sees "poverty as an armed man" ready to invade his dwelling. These and many like, are the vain shadows in which men walk severally as the complexion of their minds may be; and these often serve the purposes of those substances whose shapes they take. They are overruled by a merciful Providence, so that the threatening interposes and wards off the blow itself; the apprehension averts the evil of which it gave a false alarm. I remember in former days, one saying to me, when depressed, as I often was, by vain imaginations, "Depend upon it, what is thus feared will never come." I do not recollect how that person reasoned upon the subject, or whether this opinion was formed merely from an extensive observation of mankind. But it seems to me that this saying, so replete with encouragement to the morbidly apprehensive, is fully borne out by the principle here set forth, namely, that the fear of any evil, if that fear be impressed with a certain intensity upon the mind, and if that mind be under the good guidance of God, will turn off the evil it contemplates. For God does not grieve willingly, nor lay on one stripe more than the case requires. And if the apprehension which goes before the stroke, be so lively, nay so exaggerated an image

of the thing it dreads, that it produces all the effects, or more than the effects, of the calamity itself, He who does nothing in vain will not afflict merely for afflicting sake.

Let us then turn this consideration to practical account. If thoughts of trials and sorrows to come, invade the heart, let us ask ourselves what purposes those afflictions are calculated to serve, what lessons they are designed to teach. Let us meet those intentions, let us learn those lessons. Let us endeavour to avoid, to practise, and to be, whatever this warning voice would tell us to avoid, to practise, and to be. Let us endeavour to assume the shape into which the plastic hand of a chastising God would mould us. Let us turn our vain imaginings to good account. And let us comfort ourselves with the assurance that God will load us with no useless burdens; and that, if by his grace assisting us, we purify our hearts from sin, He will be more anxious than we ourselves, that we may be saved from the refining process of the furnace of affliction.

ESSAY XVIII.

THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION.

To those who have the welfare of their fellow-creatures at heart, there is scarcely anything more painful than to witness the sad mismanagement of children which so generally prevails. Even amongst religious parents, few appear sufficiently alive to the important duties of that relation. Still fewer seem to take an intelligent view of what those duties are. With rare exceptions, they are unaware at how early a period education, rightly understood, begins. I believe myself that the character is formed almost in infancy ; by the time, at least, that a child attains the age of four or five. After this it may be much modified, it may be deteriorated or improved ; nay, the subject may, by a religious conversion, become a new creature. But the soil on which the future seed is to be cast, the raw material which after-training is to mould into shape and fashion, the character, the tendency of the mind, the complexion of the feelings, the bias of the heart, that which is often considered as the natural, when it is rather the early acquired, disposition ;—all this is formed when most parents are scribbling mere nonsense

on that *rasa tabula* on which, at the bidding of a parent's fidelity and prayers, the finger of God would draw the image of an Infant Saviour. So early does this training in the nurture of the Lord begin, that I believe the first lessons are received, not by the ear, but by the eye. I am convinced that the mother's countenance is the unconscious study of the child; and if that be what a mother's ought to be, gentle, modest, kind, if it be the index of a heart in which habitual peace and joy and love abide,—through the channel of such a mother, every soft and holy influence will flow down from heaven upon the child. I will not even sketch the opposite picture. It is too painful to be looked at. But I will just say how careful, conscientious mothers ought to be upon this point. They should constantly keep in view, that the eyes of their children are upon them. Nor will it avail for the right forming of their minds that the parent's prayers and wishes are ever so sincere, if she brings before them a care-worn face, and features darkened and half-distracted by her anxieties about them. Still less, will all her sterling qualities compensate for the want of self-government in trifling matters; if, however in the right she may be, her infant is to behold with terror and surprise, her face soured with contention, or fired with anger. It is this want of

calculation for what children witness, that often defeats the hopes of pious parents. They complain that, in spite of all their efforts, their worldly neighbours are more favoured in their offspring than they are; and feel that in this respect they are hardly dealt with. Nevertheless, in many cases we can have no difficulty in accounting for this dispensation. The child knows nothing of the parent's wishes: but it observes, and catches the infection of her exterior deportment. What she may be in the secret intentions of her heart—all this is wholly lost upon the infant. But impressions, deep and lasting, are made by what is palpable to its senses. And if the most worldly parent be constitutionally of a disengaged, amiable, and pleasant, temper, and if the *religious* parent (for in spite of many infirmities she may be so) reserves for her child her mournings for the ungodliness of others, as well as her lamentations for her own, no wonder if such gloomy exhibitions chill the genial current of her infant's soul, and render it a dull and lifeless thing. Nor can we be surprised that the sunshine which gilds the surface of the other should give a spring and animation to the mind on which she paints her image, and make it a capable subject of much future good. This is the reason why some parents seem to have the happy art of making their children *more* reli-

gious than themselves; while other parents have the unhappy art of making their children *less* religious than themselves. To these latter then I would anxiously address this peace of friendly counsel. For your children's sake, no less than for your own, strive to rise above a religion, sincere as that may be, of struggling and complaining—a religion of ups and downs; now following conscience, now sinning against light; now at peace with God, now crying, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Strive to ascend above these wars and fightings, into the clearer air and freer atmosphere of pure and undefiled religion. Aim for the prize of your high calling, the glorious liberty of the children of God, the holiness and happiness of an undivided heart—and then be assured that no worldly parent will present to her child an appearance half so soothing, so cheerful, or so attractive as you will. But till you reach that consummation so devoutly to be wished, take care, and, whatever you may be elsewhere, in presence of your child preserve a disengaged, gentle, tranquil aspect. Keep your sighs and mournings for your hours of solitary repentance. Above all, let your infant never see the frown of anger on your face, or hear a harsh expression from your lips. *Act* the perfect Christian in its

presence ; and while you are thus drawing your child, it will be drawing you, nearer and nearer unto God.

In forming the character of children, it is of the last importance to teach them *habits of respect*. Without this the very germ is wanting, out of which all moral excellence must be developed. To honour our father and mother, is styled by the Apostle, “the first commandment with promise ;” because there is a germinating principle in filial reverence. It is the right bending of the infant heart : it is the upward tendency and God-ward inclination of the soul ; it is the early budding forth of that capacity which, in its full blow, expands into the fulfilment of the first and great commandment. It is not because the most powerful and endearing motives urge this duty upon the conscience of the child, and because to acknowledge those motives is to respond to every sacred call of gratitude and of honour ;—it is not this that renders implicit submission to the parent the fruitful seed of after good. Obedience must be taught as a habit, long before it can be adopted as a principle. It is in fact obedience, not objectively, but subjectively considered, which is the salt of the opening mind. The grand point is to teach the practice of submission ; to train the child to look up and to bow down to *something*, so that the habit of veneration

should be infused, while that compound is in preparation which is to form the future man. Children may be deprived of parents, by absence or by death, at the first dawn of life. But, if in good hands, they may nevertheless be taught the essential lessons of the fifth commandment. It is not on the reasonableness of filial duty that a child's obedience should be founded. The golden days of life are lost, if it does not obey till it can reason on the subject. No: submission should be taught as a habit; it should be infused as an instinct; it should become the temper of the mind, before it is capable of forming a conception of what duty means. The object should be to impart a spirit of submission, which will yield to the slightest touch of parental discipline. Parents sometimes think that they preserve their authority if they never *give up* to their children; if in fact in every fight they get the better; if the thing for which the child screams and stamps and dances with rage, is withheld. But this is not parental authority. It is only the power which a stronger animal has over a weaker one. Nor is whipping authority. It is merely superior strength. It is the very thing which the naughty child would inflict on the mother, if it could turn the tables and get the upper hand. There is nothing of the first commandment with promise, in these odious

exhibitions of moral impotence and brutal force. There would be no need of this disgusting discipline, if the mother knew how, and was willing patiently, to do her duty. I do not say, that in those classes of life where the mother is forced to spend her hours in manual labour, and where consequently the children cannot be constantly under her eye, that such executions may not be held *in terrorem* over them. But I do say that under more favouring circumstances the gentle firmness of the mother's look and voice would so effectually repress the first rising of resistance and self-will, as to make the child's obedience a second nature. Yes, the manner of speaking to, or looking at, a child when it is tempted to do wrong, is a thing of great importance. Some mothers have a way of dallying with sin (for all naughtiness is sin) which, I am convinced, acts unfavourably on the characters they are forming. Instead of a grave and mild rebuke, there is a mawkish effort to coax the wayward pet into a kind of half good-humour. "Oh, sure Mary (or whatever it is) would not strike her little brother in the face; she was only joking when she pinched or bit poor nurse, poor papa, or poor mamma." Now I really do not see that all this can escape the awful charge of Solomon, "Fools make a mock at sin." It is trifling with that which is no

trifle. It is making a plaything of a child's religion. For in proportion as a child is naughty, it is irreligious: it is as wicked as a child *can* be; and as unfit for heaven, if it should be early removed from hence. The repetition of hymns, and asking puzzling questions, and giving precocious answers, is no substitute for goodness. Nay, the naughty child would be better without, than with, those loathsome mixtures. No: these things should be very seriously viewed and treated. Violent fits of passion, stamping and screaming because a child cannot obtain at once whatever it may fancy, and dishonouring father and mother,—these are sins, sins against the law, and in the sight, of God; and for parents to make a mere frolic of these sins, is a decided neglect of duty. The fact is, that if a mother's first wish and paramount object were to impress the image of Christ upon her own heart, she could not sit so loose to the marring of that image upon her infant's soul. Nor could she gain credit with herself and others for that complacence and serenity which she exhibits, while her children are violating the laws of heaven before her eyes. The fact is, that the child whose follies are thus wheedled and dandled upon the knee, is a complete miniature of the unjust judge, "who feared not God or regarded man." And nothing, I repeat it, can be more

deleterious to the child than that mode of treating its acts of disrespect and subordination to those it ought to reverence ; as if there were no difference between Mammas or Grandmammas, and dogs and cats. And still the language is just the same in the instance of both. “Oh, sure Tommy, (or whatever the child may be called) would not hurt poor Papa, or poor Pompey the dog.” Now this I believe to be a radically bad system. It teaches the child practically to respect nothing. It trains it without the sense of reverence, the principle of veneration, the faculty of looking upwards, and in the direction of God. It is moreover part and parcel of a habit, of all others the most injurious to children—I mean, the habit of making them feel themselves of consequence. It is not that the parent who treats her little ones as if “the world and all that it inherits” were formed for them, is in the least degree more fond or anxious than those who adopt a far different method. As the highest perfection of art is to seem like nature ; so the mother who feels the deepest interest in the welfare of her child, can deny herself and for its sake keep out of view, those anxieties which might suggest to it the notion of its own importance. And surely nothing can be more likely to fill the youthful mind with these selfish feelings, than wherever children are,

to make them the leading objects; to treat all others as subordinate to them; to behave as if they were the centre round which every thing revolved.

In this manner of treating children before remoter relatives, or common acquaintances, as if all was secondary to them; of talking to them, and hearing them talk and ask questions, and cry for what they want, as if all in the room besides were merely ciphers,—a mother seems insensible of one important point, namely, that she is often not only losing friends, but making enemies for her children. The minds of others are not blinded by her partiality, and they cannot love wayward, troublesome, and thankless little creatures. Besides, the spoiled pet, in return, cannot love any who do not gratify its craving appetite for being the first object, and absorbing all attention. And thus it grows up, as pets seem doomed to do, unloving and unloved; clinging to the last remains of that morbid fondness with which, in its more attractive days, it was treated by its parents,—a poor isolated being, in favour with neither God nor man.

I would further observe, that mothers who, while their children are in the room, seem scarcely to notice who else may be there, and who go on with their management, or rather mismanage-

ment, of the former, as if nothing could be too noisy or revolting for the latter to hear or see,—that these mothers actually turn into occasions of injury, the very opportunities best fitted for making favourable impressions on children's minds. One great object of education, as I have already observed, is to form in children, habits of respect to others, and of humility and unselfishness as it respects themselves. Now the presence of a third party is a means afforded, if rightly used, of inculcating these lessons to the best advantage. The courtesy and deference which the parents show to those, will hold out an example (the best way of teaching) to the child. If the latter would put itself forward, or would obtrude its own concerns or wants or wishes, the look which would seem to say, "Oh, my dear, you forget who is here: this is not the time for these things,"—that look, I contend for it, may in the gentlest and most effectual way teach the lessons of self-control, of humility, of modesty, of all that is most graceful and amiable in youth. It is lamentable, therefore, to see these golden opportunities, not merely thrown away, but perverted to the very opposite purpose of hardening children in habits of selfishness and self-importance, of discourtesy to strangers, and disrespect to their superiors.

Mothers are often deceived into thinking that

their children may be liked, because no one tells them they are disliked. *They* are of course the last to hear it. And often will acquaintances praise their children to their face, who tell every one else that they are the most insufferable of creatures. This is the way of the world. And I just advert to it as a caution to parents against resenting the faithful counsels of those who will honestly speak the truth.

Some parents act on the principle, that if wayward tempers and angry passions are met with nothing but calm impenetrable patience, they will wear themselves out. And thus if the child stamps and raves, and plays the fury in every variety of form, the utmost that is done is to withhold from it the thing it wants. And this is thought enough, because the child, finding that it cannot succeed by all these efforts, will see that it only torments itself and gains nothing, and will give up the combat as a hopeless matter. In fact, their plan is simply this. Let the child's appetite be pampered to the full—let it tyrannise over maids and mother as it pleases, and it will grow tired of these things. Gluttony will be satiated, and lose its charm: the storm of angry passion will spend its fury, and there will be a calm. Well; suppose this to be true (though I believe the very opposite effects are almost uniformly

produced)—what would be the gain? What good would there be in that reformation, which was the result merely of being surfeited with sin? Is not this acting on the old profligate principle that youth must “sow its wild oats?” Suppose your child were to become indifferent to what it eat, because every luxury had palled by free indulgence;—suppose it to become mild and gentle, because no resistance had fanned the flame of its furious passions, and (ridiculous as the supposition is, yet allowing it to be ever so true) would this be a training in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord?” What would this moderation and this mildness be, but the virtues of the cold automaton or lifeless statue; the mere absence of evil, but the presence of no good? The fact is, that religion is not a merely neutral, it is a positive, thing. Nor is it indigenous in the soul; it is an infusion from without. It must be wrought into the tempers of the mind at such times, by such means, and in such proportions as fit and favouring opportunities present. And such is the state of our fallen nature, that it is on the ruins of the opposite vices that the graces of a better life are founded. Self-denial clears a vacuum for the religious principle to fill. Every step which the “stronger man” advances to gain a full possession of the heart, the “strong man” is forced to mea-

sure backward in his retreat. The petition which is offered at the infant's baptism, should be the parent's guide in education : " Grant that the old Adam in this child may be so buried that the new man may be raised up in him." To carry out the intention of this prayer in practical detail, should be the daily endeavour of the child's instructor. Every tendency to wrong should be an immediate call to bend back the pliant plant in the opposite direction. Every symptom of evil should at once be met by appliances of good. Where sin abounds grace should much more abound. And as " all carnal affections die, the things belonging to the spirit should live and grow." To speak more particularly. When a child is greedy, then is the time to teach it temperance. When it is self-willed, then is the moment to teach the lesson of self-control ; when it is angry, to teach it meekness ; when it is impatient, to teach it patience. Now the system which I condemn is that which passes by all these golden opportunities, and leaves an evil nature to correct itself, and the child to sin on till it is tired of sinning. That such a plan must fail of effecting its intended purpose, I feel confident. But even suppose it to succeed—what would the success amount to ? It would amount to the formation of a negative being, neither bad nor good ; one that had ceased

to do evil, but not learned to do well; one in whom the old Adam was buried, but no new man raised up. In a word, the best of this scheme is that it must be infallibly abortive. For could it prosper in its design, it would create the very character which God most pointedly abhors. "I would," says He, "thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot: I will spue thee out of my mouth."

ESSAY XIX.

ON THE CONVERTING POWER OF THE LAW.

THAT the Law, understanding thereby the beauty of moral perfection, and the rule of everlasting righteousness, is the instrument by which God not unfrequently leads back wandering spirits to himself, is abundantly proved by Scripture and experience. Our heavenly Father has various methods by which He brings home his banished. Sometimes it is by setting his judgments in fearful array before the sinner; sometimes by tearing a much loved idol from the heart; sometimes by the threatenings of death in the shape of sudden

accident or of disease in some vital part ; sometimes by prompt deliverances out of danger, and heart-subduing mercies ;—in fact anything, whether great or small, even the merest trifle in the hands of God, can be made his messenger to save a soul. But amongst the means which He employs for this gracious purpose, I do believe that a discovery to the mind of the nature of the Divine Law, is one of the most available and efficacious. It displays new fields, and reveals new secrets to the soul. It points to that in which long-sought-for happiness consists. It explains to the mind what it is, that it has been seeking after and never finding. It convinces us, that if we would be at liberty, we must be pure ; that if we would be at rest, we must be humble ; that if we would attain to heaven above and commence a heaven below, we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. It is true that the law, considered as a mere command, serves only to convince of sin. It is true that the law, where another law prevails with countervailing power, only binds the soul with chains, and tantalizes it with streams that dry, and fruits that wither, at its touch. But it is equally true, that the law is at times revealed to the mind, so associated, so bound up, so identified with power and love, as to remove all fear, to

infuse a spirit of adoption into the heart, and to bring us back, without any processes of reasoning, by moral gravitation, and by an ineffable attraction, to the centre of eternal rest.

I remember many years ago being told by a pious clergyman, now no more an inhabitant of time, the following history of himself. It was in a long ride we took together; and though I was almost an entire stranger to him, he opened out to me the deepest feelings of his heart. To use, as nearly as I can, his own words, he said :

“ From commencing manhood, up to the age of two or three and twenty, it would be hard to say whether vanity or vice had the chief ascendant in my mind : whether the most contemptible frivolity, or the most disgusting sensuality, took the lead in making me what I was. I was soured and discontented ; at times maddened, and at times depressed. On the whole, my life was thorough misery, and I was a burthen to myself. Amongst all the loads which pressed upon me, I think the heaviest was the feeling myself a constant distress to my father, and weight upon his heart. He had long borne with me, and ‘ hoped against hope,’ concerning me. And yet with all his patience I saw that he was ashamed and sick of me. I have sometimes come suddenly into his room, and perceived an immediate change in his naturally

cheerful countenance, and seen him heave a sort of involuntary sigh which said in more than words, ‘There comes that unhappy creature!’ This, of all my trials and humiliations, was the one which sunk me lowest. I used to recoil from his presence, with a secret wish that I had never been born. At last my father, I believe merely to get rid of me, proposed to send me on a visit to an aunt who lived in the island of Guernsey,” (or Jersey, I forget which). “I knew his meaning. I felt the degradation of this banishment; and left my home under as deep depression as perhaps the human mind is capable of feeling. There my days were wearisome, and life was tasteless. I had no companion. I wandered about without motive or inducement to go one way rather than another; an unfriended, solitary, degraded wretch. In this forlorn condition, I one day strolled into the fields alone; and strange to say—for I had neither fondness nor value for it—I happened to have a Common Prayer Book in my pocket. I had nothing else to do; and pulled it out, and in perfect listlessness and vacuity of mind, as if I had been a mere machine, I opened it. The page which presented itself was one of the triumphal Psalms. It contained nothing that seemed to describe my case; no repentings for transgression, no threatenings of the guilty, no

promises of pardon to the contrite. It was a song of praise. But it so pleased God, that in the reading of that Psalm, my eyes received their sight: my heart was enlarged: new springs of happiness, unfelt, unconceived before, refreshed my soul: the load was taken off my heart: I felt life to be a blessing; it was as if eternity had begun, and as if I trod on the very confines of heaven itself."

Such, he told me, was his experience—and as a proof of the effect not only upon his mind, but even upon his air and outward bearing, he added this remarkable circumstance. His aunt, he told me, was a woman of great penetration and intelligence; and no sooner did he enter the room on his return, than she seemed to survey him at a glance from head to foot, and then exclaimed, "My God, what has happened to you?"

He said that the heaven which he had first enjoyed had often been overcast by passing clouds; yet that the substance of the thing, the root of the blessing, continued unchanged within him; so as to convince him that on that auspicious day, and in that island of his banishment, he became a new man and a new creature: that "old things passed away, and all things became new," not for a few days, not for a few years, not for time alone, but for all eternity. Now, I should add, that this

clergyman was a man of no peculiar views. He was, when I conversed with him, strictly orthodox in every point, and was well known as what is termed an Evangelical clergyman. And still he assured me that his conversion was just as I have related. There was nothing doctrinal in it—no sense of pardoned sin, no reference to the terms and covenant, by and through which a sinner can alone be reconciled to God. All this—need I say?—he stedfastly believed. But at the time of his transition, nothing of mere doctrine was distinctly adverted to. All was merged, all was lost, in the glory of that light which opened liberty, and happiness, and present salvation to his soul. This is what I consider being converted by the law. Nor is it a solitary instance. I know of more than one besides; cases so substantially alike, that the same words, save those which record mere circumstantials, might draw their picture. In these instances the mind is, I conceive, brought back to God by a revelation of the law, or in other words by a discovery of that in which true felicity consists; of that which constitutes the happiness and conserves the uprightness of angels; of that which opens out to the view the character and the heart of God. With this aspect of the law the glowing descriptions of

the Psalmist are in perfect harmony and full accordance.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

“The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever : the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

“Moreover by them is thy servant warned : and in keeping of them there is great reward.” (Ps. xix. 7—11.)

The 119th Psalm also abounds with references to this life-giving principle of the law. One of them only I shall here notice. “I will never forget thy precepts ; for with them thou hast quickened me.” (ver. 93.) Those who have been, by this great instrument, brought from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God,—they, and none but they, can enter into all that these words imply. They know indeed, and every child of the light must know,

that it is through the alone merits and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, that sinners can be restored or admitted to the favour of Almighty God. But still the *process* by which they were brought back, the chain of mercy which drew them unto God, was the discovery to their souls of the excellence of his precepts, the beauty and perfection of his law. In a dry and barren and cheerless land, a light sprung up which opened new visions to their view : visions not of an earthly Canaan, but a Canaan of the mind ; not an outward Paradise, but a “Paradise happier far” within. This was the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price, the kingdom of heaven which God gave them eyes to see, and hearts to purchase at the expense of all they had before. Let the process have been more or less rapid, they can remember how this law rejoiced their heart ; how sweet, how blessed, how full of light and liberty, was every advance they made in keeping those commandments which are their own exceeding great reward. They can look back with joy unspeakable on that illuminated spot upon life’s map, where God, in their instance, “proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” How then can those precepts which breathed into their souls the breath of life, be obliterated from their hearts ?

No: they would with one consent disclaim the thought in the emphatic language of the Psalmist: “‘I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.’ How can I ever cease to own my obligations, or to pay the tribute of a thankful heart to that which turned my darkness into light, which filled my mouth with laughter and my tongue with joy, which gave me ‘beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?’ ‘If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.’” Thus a sense of gratitude may have prompted the resolution which these words contain. But the Psalmist felt that his deepest interests no less than his tenderest feelings were here concerned. If God’s precepts had quickened his soul, he knew that the same influence which *imparted* life, was necessary to *preserve* it. He knew that it were but vain to have been “born again not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God,” unless that word were to “live and abide” for ever in his soul. He knew that were he to forget God’s precepts, he would let go the hand that led him in the path of righteousness: the spiritual rock would cease to follow him; the pulse of spiritual life would stop, and the night of everlasting death

set in. Hence his firm unalterable resolve, "I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me."

ESSAY XX.

ON WANDERINGS IN PRAYER.

THERE is no complaint more frequent amongst those who care for their salvation, than that of wanderings in prayer. And it has been doubted by some whether any, even of the holiest saints, have their thoughts so fully in subjection, as to be quite free from this infirmity.

When we enter into our closet, and shut to the door, and kneel down in solitude and stillness, to realize God's presence and hold communion with heaven, such is the moment at which the great adversary most anxiously and actively plies his warfare against the soul. Now it is that he makes his most subtle and vigorous assaults, not upon the outworks of our more exterior life, but upon the citadel of thought itself. We have now withdrawn from the bustling and seductive world around us. He has now no alluring objects to place before our eyes, no siren's songs with which

to charm our ears, no scenes of busy life to shift before us, no succession of visitors or intruders whom he can bring in, and set to talk about this world, and make the heart forget that there is another. No: from all these the man who betakes himself to prayer is now removed, and would for a time be out of the reach of spiritual foes, had they not a more subtle warfare to carry on, even on the interior field of the mind itself. I do not mean to say that Satan can penetrate the very seat of thought; into this secret chamber of the soul none, perhaps, but God can enter. But the great deceiver has, doubtless, access to the imagination. There he can paint his images, or over-colour those already drawn; there he can touch the scenes, which memory brings back, with such alluring strokes as, if we be not watchful of his devices, to turn our prayer into sin. No one, who closely inspects the movements of his inward man, can fail to notice that, when engaged in devotion, there is some active agency at work, to divert his mind and thoughts from the important matter he has in hand. The attentive observer of his own heart will discover, that Satan has various stratagems for this purpose. His first essay, when we kneel down, is to prevent our going to prayer at all. And to effect this, it is really curious to notice how he can bring before the mind the very

topics which are most likely to indispose us to pious exercises. If there be any favourite object of which we are in too eager chase; if there be any matter in which we are engaged more difficult and entangled than every other; if there be any harassing doubt how we ought to act, or what is best to be done, on any pressing occasion; in short, whatever is most likely to strike upon some string which will set an endless train of interests and associations in play; such is the object which the tempter is sure with consummate skill to conjure up, so as to prevent our even commencing the work of prayer; at least he will strive to keep us from it till the mind is perfectly untuned for holy things, and till that Spirit which alone can teach us how to pray has been effectually banished from the heart. If Satan fails in this first attempt, and we do, when we kneel down, compose our thoughts and lift them up to God, his next endeavour is to lead the mind to turn off at every devious path which, as we travel on in prayer, presents itself to the mental eye.

The fact is, that, when we address ourselves to God, it is not as if the soul were breathing forth some barren aspirations; nor is it the mere upheaving of the heart in shapeless sighs and abstract wishes. There may indeed, at times, be “groanings of the spirit which cannot be uttered;”

but ordinary prayer is a business which we transact with heaven. When we pray, we must pray about something : various topics must come before the mind. We must bring forth out of the treasures of memory “things both new and old ;” and these we must present unto the Lord. Subjects, scenes, and persons, about which the heart is interested, must be pondered over, that we may take counsel of God’s omniscience concerning them. Hence it arises that, as the mind pursues these trains of thought, it must be constantly liable to turn aside from the narrow path of prayer. Each separate idea which comes to view, each individual object which appears upon the mental stage, these have all their various associations and endless bearings. Every one is the centre of its own system, and spreads out into a thousand branches. Here, then, the tempter is on the watch, and ready to assail. We call, for instance, before the mind a case or scene, that we may offer it up in prayer or in thanksgiving before the Lord : we think of some relative or friend, that we may intercede for him at the throne of grace. From each of these points countless lines diverge. With the friend a thousand particulars, collateral to our prayer, are intimately connected—his residence, his neighbourhood, his family, his history. Here, then, lie the strength and art of

the deceiver. Out of all these associations he selects the most attractive points: he presents them drawn out and pictured on the imagination: he strews each path, which branches off, with flowers; and thus succeeds in diverting us from the road that leads to God.

But he has devices of more deadly aim than this. He can, if we relax our vigilance, not only scatter our devotions to the winds, but turn our prayer into sin. When we cry to God for strength against some fierce temptation, or when the offences or follies of our youth pass in humiliating review before us; when we worthily lament our sins and acknowledge our wretchedness, even here we tread on slippery ground: here points of attack are opened to the adversary, points to which he directs his most envenomed darts. For, if we deprecate a thing, we must think of it: if we call a sin to remembrance, the times, the circumstances, the associations of that sin must start up, and re-appear before the mind. If, then, while we ourselves have conjured up such scenes, Satan can cast a cloud between our souls and the sanctifying light of heaven, the mind has to grapple with sins and temptations, all grouped around it, not in the energy of faith, but shorn of its strength, and on the low level of its depraved nature. Of all the wanderings in prayer, these

are, need I say, the most to be deplored ; wanderings in which the enemy of souls leads us, before we are aware whither we are going, to re-act in the thoughts the very sins for which we supplicate the pardon of heaven.

Such are the dangers to which prayer itself exposes us. But let us be faithful, and we shall overcome the wicked one : let us resist the devil, and he will flee from us. And here I would, in the first place, suggest this counsel : if, when on our knees, we find that our mind has lost its hold on prayer, and that our thoughts have wandered to the ends of the earth, let us not by a sudden exertion, as it were, pull in the reins, and thus with a vigorous effort return to the path of duty. Such violent movements are not favourable to true devotion. They may force us back to the task of formal prayer ; but calmer methods are required to re-collect the scattered thoughts ; to compose the disorders of the bosom, and again to fix the wandering heart on God. When we find, then, that we have left the path of prayer, and got into the labyrinth of the world, we should seek to disengage our minds, not by a strong reaction, but by a process as quiet and peaceful as the spirit of devotion which we would rekindle in the soul. We must not rush back with rude precipitancy into the temple of our hearts, but approach the sanc-

tuary with measured steps and gentle tread, as those who feel themselves on holy ground. This will defeat one great end of Satan, which is not only to lead us out of the way, but to render that wandering a cause of annoyance and fretful impatience to the mind.

Thus far we may escape his snares. But we may do more : we may turn his stratagems to our own account, and make his plans recoil upon himself. If thoughts, then, will intrude in spite of all our vigilance, and if we cannot turn them out, let us convert them into the aliment of prayer, and into fuel for the fire of our devotion. For instance, if some perplexing care is injected into the mind, let us not trace it through the windings that it opens, but let us at once submit it in supplication unto God, and spread it before the Lord. If Satan presents to our mental eye some person who has despitefully used us or wounded us in the tenderest part, let us take the hint, and pray that God will forgive this "enemy, persecutor, or slanderer, and turn his heart." Again : should the adversary, as I have already intimated, invade the sanctuary of confession, and essay to poison the very tears of contrition and sighs of penitence ; should he, by alluring pictures presented to the fancy, strive to turn our sorrows for past sins into the desire of repeating them ; let us meet these

cruel, horrible devices in the full panoply of still more earnest prayer. Let us drown the siren's voice in strong cries to heaven. Let us seize each fiery dart as it issues from the wicked one, and send it up in a flame of supplication unto God. Thus shall we turn the tide of warfare against the enemy of our souls. Thus will he perceive that where he intended mischief, he has been only the instrument of blessing. He will feel that he "imagined such a device as he was not able to perform." He will see that no weapon can prosper against those that hold them fast by God, and that "all things work together for good to them that love him." He will desist from his vain attempt. He will own the omnipotence of prayer, and no more heap fresh sacrifices upon its altar. He will leave the saint alone with his God, and no longer seek to molest him with wanderings in prayer.

SERMONS.

S E R M O N S.

SERMON I.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

“ And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” 1 JOHN iv. 16.

“THIS,” says our blessed Lord, “is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Man is, by his condition as a creature, and in the essential constitution of his being, a spectator : God is the glorious spectacle which he was called into existence to behold. In seeing God he fulfils the intention of his creation, and draws in the energies and succours of spiritual life and happiness. And, on the contrary, when by wilful apostacy he loses sight of God, he droops and languishes and decays, as plants unvisited by the genial sun. This is the

essence of that great change which passed on man. He no longer saw God ; but, in that darkness which the privation of essential light diffused, he conjured up terrific shapes and lying images of Deity ; and from these he fled, and fain would hide himself under whatever shelter he could find.

To bring man again within the view of that glorious object, which it is his true life to see, is the main design of his redemption. The whole Bible is one continued comment on the doctrine of my text. It is an ever-varying exhibition of the most affecting pictures of the goodness, the patient long-suffering, the tender mercy, the exhaustless love, the boundless amiability of God. The first page almost we open bears ample testimony to the truth that "God is love:" "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." What do these terms imply, but the beneficent desire to impart a portion of his own exhaustless joys ? To raise up recipients or vessels into which he can pour the streams of his own essential blessedness ? For, if God be the possessor and fountain of felicity unalloyed and infinite, to call into being counterparts or miniatures of himself, is the utmost that we can conceive of overflowing charity and boundless love.

To that happiness for which man was destined,

all around him was formed to minister. The picture which the sacred penman draws of the residence prepared for man is a scene so pure, so calm, so unlike this troublesome world, that paradise, that magic word, can touch mysterious chords within us. We somehow feel as if we ourselves, not in the person of our representative, but in our own persons, and in our own experience, had once tasted its freshness, its innocence, its sunshine, and its cloudless skies, and were thence ejected to wander through the wilderness which now surrounds us. "The Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."

We know in how dark a cloud sin descended upon these pure and innocent abodes. This was by man's doing. He had marred God's beautiful work: he had brought down ruin upon himself: he had rebelled against almighty goodness. But in this tragic scene what part does scripture assign to a justly offended God? He, to whom a thousand years are as one day, runs through man's prospective history at a glance. His plan is formed, his covenant ordered in all things and sure. The willing victim is doomed to die. Through the long vista of revolving years, through

the long aisle of intervening ages, the altar of the cross is seen, and upon it the great sacrifice, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Yes, to Adam, fallen, apostate, and self-ruined, was the promise made that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

Again, when the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and the earth was filled with violence, and when no other course was left than to sweep away that guilty race ; no sooner had his "strange work" been done, than God returns to the essential element of his nature, and love shines forth again. When the deluge had subsided, when the sun reappeared and impressed his arch of glory upon the clouds, God hails that cheering sight as the emblem of his own forgiveness. He, who in the days of his flesh was wont to take his lessons from the casual objects that he saw ; as though his attention were at the moment arrested by this most beautiful of nature's processes, points to the rainbow, and ordains that that shall be the pledge and token of his covenant.

But a few short years after man had thus set out upon a new score of mercy and forgiveness, we find darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the people. But this was only to afford new displays of the patient, long-suffering, and

exhaustless love of God. Amongst the faithless, one faithful worshipper was found ; and, from the time that God calls him out of his idolatrous country, to the closing scene, when Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, his whole history is one continuous exhibition of the divine condescension and philanthropy ; nay, it displays the divine character as not insensible to the claims of personal and peculiar friendship. We say so without irreverence, because we take the language from the mouth of God himself ; “ But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.” In full keeping with this, we find God thus disclaiming all concealments which were inconsistent with that sacred tie : “ Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ?” But no scene in that eventful history so opens out the treasures of God’s heart, as that in which Abraham, when he was tried, offered his only begotten son. There is an ardour of affection, a glow of feeling upon the part of God, as if love, for a time restrained, had forced its way, and burst forth in a resistless torrent : “ By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I

will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore: and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.” The same character is sustained throughout all God’s dealings with the Jews. What touching pictures are drawn by God’s own hand, of his jealousy, his wounded feeling, and ill-requited love! Does the great God, in condescension to our capacities, speak of himself after the manner of men, and assume the title of a father? Is it then in terms of peremptory command, or stern rebuke, that we hear him speaking? No. The accents are like the voice that was heard in Ramah—lamentation, weeping, and great mourning. “I have nourished and brought up children: and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Or does the Lord of heaven and earth describe himself as standing in the still nearer relation of a husband? What proud mortal, who bears that name, would brook the treatment or forgive the injuries of which he so feelingly complains? “They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s,

shall he return unto her again? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to me again, saith the Lord.” Could it, I repeat, have entered into the heart of man to conceive that the Majesty of heaven would speak in the following terms? “But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob: thou hast been weary, O Israel: thou hast made me to serve with thy sins:” “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain?” “Behold, I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.”

But these fainter pencillings of the ancient scriptures comparatively lose their lustre, when, in the New Testament, the original, God manifest in the flesh, appears upon the field. If we desire fully and intimately to know what is the character, the disposition, the mind, the temper, of that mysterious Essence, in whom we live and move and have our being, that invisible Power who formed us, we know not how, and on whose mere will our destiny depends: if, utterly helpless and blind to what is before us, ignorant of what we are, and a wonder to ourselves, if we desire to know who it is that encircles us on every side, and in whose hands we are;—we have only to look unto Jesus. In answer to these deep anxieties

and ardent searchings of our nature, his gentle voice replies, "It is I, be not afraid:" "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God." Yes, it is thy Maker, it is he that formed thee, which says, "Come unto me; and I will give you rest." It is he, upon whom thy life hangs and thy all depends, who invites you to his heart. It is he, before whom the angels bow, who would win your cold affections by the last, best proof which he could, in the compass of possibility, have given of his love for you. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Here, then, is the solution of the grand problem—What is the character of that Being from whose presence there is no means of flight, from the grasp of whose omnipotence there is no possibility of escape?

When we would seek in God the refuge that we want, we are no longer lost in the infinitude of his vastness. We can be no longer taunted, as was the long-suffering Job: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." No; the word is nigh us, even in our mouth and

in our heart. The vain imagination of the Lycaonians is realized in our case; "God is come down to us in the likeness of men." The patriarchs in Egypt were filled with awe when, strangers and simple shepherds as they were, they were ushered into the presence of the great ruler of the land; but all their fears subsided when they found that mighty potentate, in all his glory, to be none other than their brother Joseph. So it is that the overwhelming brightness of the Godhead is mitigated and softened, in its passage through that Mediator, who bears our nature and wears the form of man. It now requires no painful effort, no straining of our faculties beyond their natural strength, to hold communion with God. No: it is in the stillest composure of the soul; when the heart is at ease, and when all within is peace, then it is that we best appreciate, and turn to its intended purpose, the incarnation of God. It is then that we feel that there is a "mystical union betwixt Christ and his church:" that the Maker is also the husband of the soul; that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" that "we are one with Christ and Christ with us;" that it is "no longer we that live, but Christ that liveth in us; for the life that we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us."

Such are the deep and ineffable consolations of those who believe the record which God hath given of his Son.

Howard, the great philanthropist, has somewhere mentioned, that the only means he found effective to act upon the minds of hardened criminals, was to persuade them that there was still some bosom, that could warm with kindness towards them. Long inured to strife, debate, and hatred, repulsed and driven beyond the pale of the sympathies of their kind, their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them, they had, as it were, forgotten that there was such a thing as the milk of human tenderness, or that man could feel for man; but through all those obstructions, his disinterested benevolence forced a passage to their hearts. When he succeeded, hard as it was, in persuading them that there was one that felt for them, that pitied their distresses, and that loved their souls; as these new accents reached their ears, their frozen hearts began to thaw; mingled emotions, and, most of all, surprise, spoke in every feature; and tears of penitence, of hope, of wonder, and of joy, ran down the furrows of their rugged faces. So "we ourselves also were sometimes living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But, after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour

toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Yes, my brethren ; it is his mercy, it is the knowledge of his mercy, it is the clear and realizing apprehension of the mind, that God is merciful—this alone can call forth into action that principle of love which is itself but a convertible term for the salvation of the soul. Love, it is said, begets love ; and it is only by tasting and seeing the amiability of God's character, that we can fulfil the first and great commandment. It is against the possibilities of nature to love, because we are commanded to love, because we admit it to be our duty, and know it to be our interest to love. We can no more love what is not attractive, than we can see what is not visible, or hear where universal silence reigns. No : we must see God as the Scriptures paint Him : we must believe in the records of his love : we must feel a deep persuasion that his mercies to man are but a sample of what He is, an efflux of that goodness which is none other than the copy of his heart, nay, the very essence of his being. Thus it is, that the history of man's redemption is not merely the history of his good fortune, as if he had had an escape from one who is capable of a far different conduct. No : the history of our redemption is the character of God. He, who is

“the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” acted toward us as He would act towards ten thousand worlds, who had by a *precisely similar* defection revolted from his gentle and paternal rule, trampled upon his blessings, and cast away his mercies from them. Such is the doctrine of my text: “We know and believe the love that God hath to us.” It does not go on to say, “We bless our stars that in our peculiar instance God was merciful and gracious.” No: the reason assigned for God’s love to us is this—that “God is love.” And thus it is that “he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Whosoever breathes that blessed atmosphere inhales the nature and the very life of God.

What scenes of blessedness does this assurance, that God is love, open to the view. For love is not a name, however soft and soothing even the name itself may be: love is an actual existence. If God be love, there is a certain sense in which we might invert the terms, and proclaim that love is God; and surely it is so, if “he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.” If, then, we would pass from words to things, and ascertain by the touch of actual experiment what God is, what that element of bliss and atmosphere of joy may be, in which the heirs of heaven will live for ever; if we would know the quality of the fountain, let us

mark the streams which flow down to us : let us take some of those instances in which the human heart has reached its highest pitch of joy, of tenderness, of gratitude, of the fulfilment of its brightest hopes and fondest wishes. How, for example, does a mother feel when “she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world?” How did the patriarch Jacob feel when he said, “It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive : I will go and see him before I die.” When that “dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother,” and when he was snatched from the grave, and restored to her longing arms, how, think ye, did that “widow’s heart sing for joy?” Or what were the feelings of that father who exclaimed, “It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad ; for this my son was dead, and is alive again?” Or how would *you* feel if you had a wandering child thus rescued and restored ? Or how *do* you sometimes feel when you look perhaps upon a child who never caused you one moment’s pain, save in the bitter thought that you must one day part ? Or what would your transport be, if the desire of your eyes, now laid in the silent grave, were, like Lazarus, to arise, and you were to hear that voice once more, and see the sunshine of that smile again ? But there are aspirations of the heart which bear on higher

themes than these—things which the natural man perceiveth not ; secrets of the Lord, known alone to them that fear him ; things which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, but which God hath revealed to us by his Spirit ;” I mean those verdant spots upon the map of life, those bright moments, transient as they often are, when the pure in heart see God ; when the meek are refreshed with the abundance of peace ; when all is silent but that voice which says,

“Hark ! my soul, it is the Lord :

’Tis thy Saviour : hear his word ;”

when, on the wings of faith and prayer, we ascend to the summit of that mount on which eternal sunshine dwells ; when the language of our heart is, “Let this continue, and we desire no more : ‘This is the living water, which springeth up into everlasting life :’ ‘This is the living bread, which came down from’ God : ‘Surely the Lord is in this place :’ ‘This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’” I take such moments as samples of what I mean, because these emotions of the heart are but emanations of essential love. So that the best notion we can form of what God is, infinitely inadequate though it be, is to take the happiest moment which we have experienced, when life

is joy, and the heart is filled with love, to extend that thought, to enlarge that point, till it spreads out into infinitude before the mind. Such, then, as far as we have faculties to comprehend it, is God. Such is the fulness of joy; such the region of boundless bliss; such the eternity which those will inhabit who are here made partakers of the divine nature, who dwell in love, who dwell in God, and God in them. Such are the prospects which unfold themselves to those who, being justified by faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Such are the mercies which are freely offered you. Such is that pure and undefiled religion, of which it has been truly said, that no man, who knows what it is, could refuse to embrace it. For we are all, by the primary instinct of our nature, in search of happiness. It is to satisfy this native thirst, that all the children of this world are ever in restless, ceaseless motion. They sigh for peace; but there is no peace: they catch at mere appearances of bliss. They are mocked by visions of delight; but there is no substance in them: they are semblance, and not worth: they are but the shadow of what they seem to be—pictures which our fond fancies paint, gilded clouds, dreams of the heart, from which it soon awakes to the stern reality of restless anxieties and busy cares, or to the tiresome repetition

of hacknied amusements, threadbare enjoyments, and worn-out pleasures. Have any of you, whom I address, been looking to the world to satisfy the wants and allay the thirstings of your spiritual nature? I do not ask whether you have been successful in your pursuit. You cannot have been so. The world could never fill that void. The world neither understands the constitution, nor can it heal the sickness, of the soul. The world cannot stop the throbbings of the desolated heart; it cannot "minister to a mind diseased, or pluck from memory a rooted sorrow." Do you find, then, a famine in the land? Is there no water there? Have you been wandering in that far country, from one bleak region to another, seeking rest and finding none? Would you, like the prodigal in the Gospel, satisfy the calls of the immortal mind for pure enjoyment, with the husks on which the children of this world fain would feed? Does no man give unto you? Are all around you strangers to what passes within you in your solitary hours? Is there no man that careth for your soul? Arise, then, and go to thy Father. The arms of God are open to receive you: glorious beings, bright intelligences, are waiting to welcome your return. Ministering spirits are in attendance, ready to catch the joyful sound of "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on

him." The holy angels are tuning their harps: celestial voices are preparing for a new song of praise and of thanksgiving unto God, for another sinner that has repented, another brother who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found.

SERMON II.

ON THE ANOINTING THE FEET OF JESUS.

“Then said Jesus, Let her alone : against the day of my burying hath she kept this.”—JOHN xii. 7.

THE previous verses of this chapter are full of interest. The time of his offering up was now at hand ; and the blessed Jesus draws nigh to the predestined place where the last scene of His afflicted life, even the death of the cross, was to be enacted. It is the free movement of his own will which leads this Lamb to the slaughter. He therefore comes into the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem. To Bethany, in particular, He directs his steps that He might, before He takes his final leave, impart some blessing to that family whom He loved ; and enjoy for a few short moments those solaces of friendship, to which the

tenderness and gentleness of his heart disposed Him. "Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead." He was prompted perhaps to this visit, partly by a desire to ascertain whether the extraordinary exercise of his love and power, so lately manifested at that place, had produced its due and legitimate effects. It is thus, that where much is given, much is required. It is thus that large returns are expected from those on whom signal mercies have been bestowed, on whom marvellous light has shone. May we present those fruits of gratitude, of holiness, and of love, which in the midst of his sorrows, the blessed Jesus was cheered by finding in the hearts of "Mary, and her sister and Lazarus."

The circumstances in which our Lord and Lazarus now met, are suited, and no doubt were intended, to familiarize the thoughts of the unseen world. They are calculated to make us feel as though the passage from time to eternity were not that violent and startling thing, which the misgivings of the carnal mind and natural heart would make it. Here we have, as it were, two inmates in the same domestic scene, one on his way to the land of spirits, the other but lately arrived from that region which lies beyond the grave. They

meet, just like persons passing and repassing on the common road of life; one arriving from some foreign country, and the other about to take his departure for the same. Nor does the fact that our Lord was so quickly to leave this world, and that Lazarus had so lately risen from the dead, seem to take them (I speak of the mere manhood of our Saviour) out of the ordinary condition of humanity. There seems to be nothing of ghostly awe about them. All appears as natural and easy as if no "strange thing" had happened, or was about to happen, to the one, or to the other. They look quite like themselves, and in full possession of themselves. There is, in a word, something in this meeting, which tends to soften the separating line between the two worlds, and to blend time into eternity. It is true that the case of Him who dwelt in the glory of the Father before the world was, stands out in bold relief from every other. Though his atoning agonies were interposed, yet through that cloud He saw his own heaven opening to receive Him. He heard by anticipation the angelic choirs repeating, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates: even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." But even as it respects his true disciples, I am convinced that the more they advance in spiritual knowledge, and become the subjects of pure and

undefiled religion, the less harsh and violent will be the idea which they form of the transition from time to eternity. The more they will be influentially impressed with the conviction, that the same God is present in earth and heaven ; that the same uncreated sun shines in both hemispheres. The more they will be practically assured that death can operate no change upon the moral condition of the soul ; and consequently that it will translate them to a state not essentially, but only circumstantially, different from the present. A translation, as it affects the soul, into higher measures of the same enjoyments as it possesses now ; removing at the same time all obstructions to the fulness of its felicity ; all impediments arising from a frail and sinful body, from the miseries of a groaning and travailing creation, from the sorrows that flesh is heir to, and from the troubles to which man is born, as the sparks fly upwards. We find Lazarus, just risen from the dead, falling back into the usual habits of life, and anxious to give his divine and gracious visitor the best reception in his power. "There they made him a supper ; and Martha served : but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him."

And here may I be allowed to hazard a conjecture which has been suggested to my own mind ? "How is it possible," it is often said, "that one

who had seen, as Lazarus did, the light and glories of the celestial world, could enter a second time into this grovelling state of being; and endure with patience a change so unfriendly to his happiness?" Would not his senses have been so dazzled by the brightness of the scenes he saw, that he would in this lower world "meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night?" To this I answer, If memory be dependent on impressions made by the sentient principle upon the brain, and if the mind can, in this present state, recur to past events only by tracing them as written and recorded there, it would seem that if the spirit be for a time separated from the body, it can, upon its return to its earthly tenement, find no memorial of its experiences during the interval of its separation. The spirit being absent, did not act upon the material organ. Nothing with which it was then conversant is registered. And consequently when it is reunited to the body, and brought again within the limits of that condition, in which nothing can be remembered which has not been imprinted upon fleshly tables; it would follow that all those, who, like Lazarus, have returned from the invisible world, must be wholly unconscious of what they saw or witnessed there. It might, indeed be said that in *his* peculiar case, to change

from heaven to earth was not loss but gain ; because it readmitted him to that presence which is better than heaven itself. But let us consider that He who sat as a familiar visitant in this humble dwelling, inhabiteth eternity, and fills all worlds ; so that to whatever region the soul of Lazarus was wafted, “ He was there also.” Besides, the days were numbered, and the hours almost spent, during which the blessed Jesus was to be the visible Guide and Shepherd of his flock. And doubtless this must have cast an air of melancholy over the scene before us, and mingled sorrow with that cup of joy.

In full keeping with their character as elsewhere drawn, Martha took the careful part. She showed her affection, warm and cordial though it was, by an active and ready attention to her Saviour’s wants, and anxious provision for his comfort. “ Martha served.” But she whom St. Luke describes as sitting at Jesus’ feet to hear his word, manifests a feeling of the heart which flowed in deeper currents. “ Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair ; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” This costly ointment had perhaps been purchased, in anticipation of the sacred use to which Mary now devoted it. Or

it might have been, though not a necessary of life, a suitable appendage to that position which she thought it her duty to maintain, (for in the smallest as well as the greatest things, one of a Christian spirit feels accountable to God). Or, if there had still lingered in that meek soul some sparks of the vanity which so easily besets us, and she had in this one instance gone farther in this outlay upon her person than duty prompted; she had lately been witness of a scene which, of all others, withers the roots of vanity in the heart,—the death of one she fondly loved. Those tears which she had shed at the grave of Lazarus, had quenched the spark and washed away the stains of pride, and purified her heart from the defilement of that sin. Yes, it is good for the proud to taste the cup of sorrow. That medicine can do more than ten thousand sermons to cure that dangerous disease; to lower the pulse, and cool the fever, and to take away the proud flesh, of carnal nature. And thus it was, that when her brother died, the last finish was given to the crucifixion of Mary's heart. And thus a change took place in the little economy of her attire, (little in the estimate of man, but not of God,) and she denied herself the luxury of this ointment as superfluous and vain. And He who knows the secrets of the heart was witness to that victory over self. He resolved

that she should be no loser by this sacrifice. He accepted it as an offering to himself. He put honour on the giver and on the gift, and decreed that the ointment, and she who “poured it on His body,” should be had in everlasting remembrance.

Surely, under all the circumstances of the case, a more affecting sight could not have been imagined, nor could a more tender or touching exhibition be presented to the view, than this meek disciple kneeling before her Saviour, and with her hair wiping from His feet that ointment, which one less devoted would have poured upon the hair itself.

But scenes of purity and love are not congenial with a heart in which opposing passions dwell. “The carnal mind is enmity against God;” not against an empty name or abstract notion, but against that nature which is the concentration and the source of all that is “true, and venerable, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report.” It is that light which dispels the darkness which he loves; it is that holiness which shames the impurity to which he cleaves;—these are the things which render God, and all that proceeds from God, and all that tends to God, so hateful to the slave of sin. They are abhorrent to his tastes, and death to all his joys. They are against the grain

and current of that world which he has chosen for his portion. They are against “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;” the sum and substance of all that the carnal mind can dream of, or shape to itself as a happiness worth possessing. In such a frame of spirit did the traitor contemplate, with evil eye, a scene at which angels might rejoice. “Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” (4, 5.)

There is no weapon which the men of the world employ more actively against religion, than contrasting its airy speculations and visionary frames, with those practical and efficient duties which promote the temporal good of man, and bear upon the interests of society. And no wonder they should prefer the latter to the former. For God, and all that relates to God, is “far above out of their sight.” They are to them precisely what all visible nature is to the blind. Prayer, and the consolation of God’s Spirit, and the blessed hope of everlasting life, are to them mere words without a meaning: they go for nothing in their account. And in this false estimate they are confirmed, by living in the midst of those who are as dead to spiritual things as they are themselves.

And thus outnumbering those who know God's truth by an overwhelming disproportion, they set them down as men of fanciful and strange opinions. And so it would be with the naturally blind, if instead of being comparatively few, they formed the far greater portion of society. If here and there in a dark world there were a single individual, one among thousands, who asserted of himself that he had a sense to which all else were strangers, the blind would only laugh at his description of light and colours, and all the glories of the landscape. They would resolve his vision into a mere aberration of the brain. And so it is that those who "speak that they do know, and testify that they have seen," are discredited and unheeded. The common sense is against them; they are outnumbered; and when it is put to the vote "whether these things are so," the dissentients have it by an overwhelming majority. Thus it is that duties immediately to God are cried down as either valueless, or, at least, as subordinate to those which bear upon mere temporal concerns. And thus it is that the latter are extolled, not because the heart that is insensible to God feels most for man, but because these human virtues are the best standard under which those can rally who would oppose themselves to the supernatural graces of God's Holy Spirit. It

is not that the men of the world *perform* those duties to their neighbour, with which they would shoulder out the duties which they owe to God. No: the *practice* of these things they leave to persons of another stamp. All they want is a convenient *theory*; something that may catch the vulgar mind; something whose palpable utility and tangible reality may be plausibly contrasted with the irrelevancy of religion to what in their hearts they believe to be the whole of man, or of man's concerns.

Of this character of mind we have the picture drawn to the life, in Judas. We have in him a thorough specimen of one who "savoured not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." But amongst the legion which infested the bosom of this unhappy sinner, that covetousness which God abhorreth, stands out in bold relief from all the rest. Of this the Evangelist thus informs us: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." If there appear a harshness in this language, not well in keeping with the gentle spirit of the disciple which Jesus loved; if we catch in these words an asperity which we should not expect to hear from him who leaned on Jesus' breast, and whose peculiar office it seemed to be to teach that God is love—let us

remember how calculated the scene before him was to stir up whatever latent spark of hostile passion still might linger in that meek and gentle soul. “Be angry and sin not,” is at once the interdiction of an unlawful, and the warrant of a lawful indignation against sin. And assuredly no greater violence could be offered to the feelings of a pious heart, than the hateful exhibition of presumption, hypocrisy, and enmity to God’s goodness, which was here presented. Yes: there is an essential warfare between righteousness and unrighteousness. And hence it is that we see the spirit of this meek Apostle stirred within him at the revolting display of such consummate wickedness. And let us remember that a gentler spirit than that of John, that He of whose fulness all the love that flowed from that amiable disciple’s heart was but the slender stream; let us remember that His mercy, if too long abused, will slowly and reluctantly be transformed into the sterner attribute of justice. Let us remember that the day is coming, when “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, will hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne;

and (oh ! strange combination !) from the WRATH OF THE LAMB.”

Had Judas indeed cared for the poor, he must have known how little he could serve their interests by withholding from the blessed Jesus that homage of the heart, that devotion of all we are and have, which we so entirely and so strictly owe Him. The fact is, that if the love of Christ reigned in every soul, the poor would cease out of the land. All the natural ills that flesh is heir to, all the groanings and travailings of this afflicted world, are but the physical counterparts of moral evil ; the dark shadows and material images of sin. As in the primeval paradise, everything that was grateful to the senses and pleasant to the sight, was but the draught or copy of the far happier paradise of the human breast ; so all the troubles to which our fallen race are born, all the miseries of this vale of tears, are but the response of outward nature to the hidden diseases and tumultuous passions which prey upon the very vitals of the soul of man. Let all then be brought like Mary to sit at the feet of Jesus. Let the love of God, like a refiner's fire, purify every soul. Let sin, the cause, be removed, and suffering, the consequence, would have no more place amongst us. Sorrow and sighing would flee away, the poor would have enough and to spare. “ Our

garners would be full and plenteous with all manner of store : our sheep would bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets. Our oxen would be strong to labour, there would be no decay : no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets."

From the awful exhibition of a soul estranged from God, from the traitor Judas, we turn with an admiration only heightened by the contrast, to the loyalty of a faithful heart, so beautifully displayed in Mary. "Then said Jesus, Let her alone : against the day of my burying she hath kept this : " or as St. Mark expresses it, "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." It would appear that Mary, meek and retiring as she was, was gifted with an illumination and fortitude of which the Apostles were not, at the time, partakers. To them the subject of their blessed Master's sufferings was, in condescension to their weakness, involved in mystery. It was a hard saying, and they were afraid to hear it. They could not bear to face the plain and open revelation of a truth which was death to all their hopes. For this they had eyes that saw not, and hearts that would not understand. So that when "He taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him ; and after that He is

killed, He shall rise the third day; they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him." It is hard to imagine how so unequivocal a declaration could have been unintelligible. But doubtless the cloud that rested on their hearts was interposed in mercy. Severe as their trials were, they would have been utterly beyond their present strength had they realized to themselves the sufferings, the painful and ignominious death, which awaited their beloved Master. But she who so often sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word, had there learned lessons too hard even for the Apostles then to bear. Her feminine and gentle spirit had imbibed from thence a strength to which these latter, previously to the Pentecostal baptism, still were strangers. For what but power from on high could have carried her through this scene of sorrows? What could have stilled the throbbing of her heart, or stayed the torrent of her grief, when she addressed herself to the performance of this last sad office of devoted love? when she anointed with precious oil, and wiped with her own hair, those feet which were so soon to be pierced with nails and fastened to the cross? Well might it be said to her, as to the Syrophenician mother, "O woman, great is thy faith." Well might those lips which cannot err repeat the words which both St. Matthew and St. Mark re-

cord: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." For God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor are his measures of things, or estimates of great and small, according to the measures and estimates of men. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." It is thus that the splendid performances of the world are blazed abroad, flash with a sudden glare, and then go out for ever. While this simple humble offering of a faithful heart is consecrated to deathless fame, and predestinated to be had in everlasting remembrance. These are the actions which are "called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Under the old dispensation, God had certain treasures of memorial deposited in the ark, as the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, the tables of the covenant, &c. So also in the archives of the Gospel, He has laid up his jewels; trifles light as air in the scales of human estimation; but in the balance of the sanctuary far outweighing the boasted treasures of the world.

Such are the widow's mite, the seamless coat which the hands of some disciple wove, the good Samaritan's oil and wine, the alabaster box of ointment, the tears of penitence, of gratitude, of sympathy with a Saviour's sorrows, which the passage now before us, and parallel scriptures, have recorded. These things are written for our learning. They are exhibitions to the mental eye of pure and undefiled religion. They are living patterns of that simplicity, tenderness, humility, and devotedness to Christ to which all must aspire who would enter into the kingdom of heaven. They are pictures drawn by the hand of inspiration, and set forth in the sacred pages, that we may copy them upon the tablet of our own hearts. They are exhibited to our view, that by stedfastly beholding we may become the subjects of that assimilative process by which we are transformed into the similitude of things we see. With this view I would point the attention of my readers to the affecting picture which we have been contemplating; and as on a similar occasion our Lord said unto Simon, so now would I repeat: "Seest thou this woman?" See her posture, as her body and soul are bending at her Saviour's feet: see her wiping her ointment and her tears at once with the soft appliance of her hair: see her mastering the feelings that pierced her soul, stemming

the impetuous tide of her own sorrows, that she might "do what she could" to lighten the burden of that anguish which was about to overwhelm her Lord and Master amidst the atoning agonies of his death. "Seest thou this woman?" Then "Go, and do thou likewise."

But it may be said, "We have not the opportunity or the power of doing so. We cannot by such positive acts manifest our love to Christ. We cannot, like the disciples of that day, 'minister to Him of our substance.' We cannot react those scenes in which He went in and out among us, and familiarly conversed with men. 'He is not here, but is risen.' He is now beyond those seas of trouble and clouds of sorrow, through which He then was passing. He no longer, as part of his humiliation, looks for the consolations of human friendship, or receives comfort from the sympathies of that little flock who, because they had no more that they could do, bewailed and lamented Him. We can in thought alone, imitate the pattern which is here set before us. Well then, let our thoughts be thoughts of devotedness, and love, and, in the estimate of Him who knows the heart, we have in effect, though not in fact—in the spirit, though not in the letter—poured our precious ointment on the feet of Jesus, and wiped them with the hairs of our head. Such is the

goodness of our God—such is the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven—such the contrast between the spiritual and the fallen world, that in the former there are no such separations as tear our hearts asunder here. There are no such dislocations as sever the appetite from the thing desired ; no impediments interposed between the wishes and the object to which the wishes point. In the spiritual system and eternal economy of things, there is enough and to spare. There is provision for every capacity of the soul. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” is the language of Him who formed the heart, and bound up in its essence such vast desires, such longings after an infinitude of bliss.

On this principle it is, that with God the will is taken for the deed. We have done, in his sight, whatever He knows the heart to be sincerely and anxiously disposed to do. Thus the poor man's pity is counted as his alms. His mite, multiplied by his charity, swells to an amount which the arithmetic of this world has no rule to calculate. The cold water which was all he had to give, shall sparkle in that transparent cup which angels shall hold out to the gaze of an admiring universe.

If then our hearts go with the disciple whom the text records ; if we feel our souls to kindle at the picture there presented ; if we are disposed to

mingle our tears with those she shed upon the feet of Jesus ; if we call her Blessed, and honoured above all that earthly triumphs could bestow ; why then, what this woman hath done, we have done also.

It is true, an everlasting memorial in this world below, will not be ours. But in the books of heaven, the faithful wish that struggled in our breast, will be imperishably recorded. In that day when all hearts are opened, the secret breathing of the soul will be proclaimed upon the house-tops. And then shall it appear that *he* shall receive the highest reward, not who had most of power and opportunity, but he who did what he could, and gave to God the free-will offering of an undivided heart.

SERMON III.

GOD'S SUFFICIENCY AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

PHIL. ii. 12, 13. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

It requires but a slight acquaintance with the sacred scriptures to be assured that there are upon its surface a variety of texts, which it is hard, nay, impossible, for us to reconcile one with another. Nor is that apparent collision of doctrines any where more remarkable, than in those passages which speak of the sovereign grace of God upon the one hand, and man's responsibility upon the other. They appeal to us as if every thing depended on the former, and, at the same time, as if every thing depended upon the latter. Amongst a multitude of instances, let us take the

following, in reference to divine grace : “ A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” (John iii. 27.) “ By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) “ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James i. 17.) Let us also select an equal number which lay no less stress on the importance of our own endeavours : “ By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Matt. xii. 37.) “ Who will render to every man according to his deeds ; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life ; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” (Rom. ii. 6—10.) “ Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the

Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) Now, that the doctrines which these passages of Scripture respectively contain are true, we know; but how to reconcile them, how to show their consistency, to solve the difficulties, and to silence all controversies, which may arise concerning them, is a task to which perhaps no finite mind is competent.

They have been compared to the shafts of the rainbow, which touch the earth and are plain and palpable to the eye, while the centre of their unity above, the key-stone of the arch in which they meet, is embosomed in the clouds, and shaded from our view. To reduce the immensity of the scriptures into such a shape as suits our notions of a *system*, is as far removed from our power, as to lift the earth from its foundations. Our part is to believe, and practise what we do understand of that wondrous and mysterious volume, and not to deal with it as if the mind, whose inspirations gave it being, were upon a level with our own. No: if some texts of scripture refer every thing to the grace of God, and if others would apparently make every thing depend upon our own doings, let us pray as if the former were the whole truth; and let us use all diligence, as if the latter were no less so. It is by the seeming opposition of these passages that they are "pro-

fitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," to the most contrasted cases of the mind which the endless variety of our wants, experiences, and circumstances can exhibit. They furnish "milk for babes, and strong meat for men of age." With us it lies, for ourselves or others, to select such portions as are appropriate, and thus "rightly to divide the word of truth:" otherwise we might, by an undue application, render that word of worse than none effect, and "wrest the Scriptures to our own destruction."

To explain my meaning, let us suppose that a person were to come to one of us, and say, "I have this day resolved, that in thought, word, or deed, I will never commit another sin; and by this resolution I am determined to abide;" would it be right to cheer one thus presumptuously relying upon his own strength, and boasting in self-righteousness, with such passages as, "Work out your own salvation;" "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap:" "Then shall he reward every man according to his works?" No, assuredly: no poison could be more deadly than such doctrines, thus injudiciously applied. They would be like cordials in a fever, or stimulants to the inflammatory action of the brain. On the other hand, were we addressed by one whose mental

constitution was in perfect contrast with this presumptuous confidence, and were his language in the following strain, "It is in vain for me to kick against the pricks: I am utterly helpless: I am carried just as the current bears me: I have no power to resist sin, but yield passively to every temptation;" would it be wise to meet this faint-heartedness, to cheer this guilty sloth, by saying—"True: 'we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves:' 'Without me ye can do nothing:' 'It is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure?'" No: assuredly the disease would require a far different treatment. In all such cases, scripture thus unseasonably applied can only increase the malady, and add new fuel to the flame.

But, though in theory we cannot demonstrate the consistency of the two great doctrines already noticed, I am persuaded that a faithful endeavour to act the part which devolves upon ourselves, will best explain the nature of its inseparable connection with that other part which "belongeth unto the Lord." In fact, I believe that no man can truly know what it is to find his sufficiency in God, but he who strives to put forth all the strength and energy which he himself possesses. He who struggles in vain to lift a weight disproportionate to his powers is alone in a position to

feel the full relief which the interposition of a stronger arm can give. And so it is in spiritual things. He only who engages in the war, and fights the battle, can appreciate the blessing of having Omnipotence as his sure ally. It is exactly in proportion as we strive to do all, and strive in vain, that we can have an experimental consciousness of God's almighty aid. And thus the believer feels that "his strength is made perfect in weakness," and can with the Apostle exclaim, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

In my text, we have an example of each of the two descriptions of passages under our consideration: and we have these brought together in such a manner as to urge our entire dependence upon the grace of God, as the motive for our exerting our utmost endeavours: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Declining, as we have already done, the task of showing how these two grand doctrines unite in one harmonious system, nevertheless let us endeavour to trace what might have been some leading associations in the Apostle's mind, between our working out our own salvation, and the conviction that our entire sufficiency is of God.

But, first of all, we cannot but remark how St. Paul presses upon the Philippians the very circumstance of his removal from them, not as an excuse for a relaxation of their endeavours, but as a motive for increased exertion: "Not," he says, "as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence." The withdrawal from their society of so vigilant a pastor, and so bright a pattern, must have been doubtless a sore bereavement; but that dependence upon a human arm, to which those who call men masters upon earth are prone, that sickly sorrowing after means withdrawn, or religious friends removed, when God, the Fountain of all grace, the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother," is with us, within us, and around us,—that preference of the second to the first commandment, the scripture here and everywhere pointedly condemns. The Apostle does not speak as if he thought it would be a kind of merit, a sign at least of pious tenderness of heart in the Philippians, to sit down, like the captive Israelites, and hang their harps upon the willows, and say: "How shall we sing the songs of Sion, when we have lost our shepherd, our father, the guide of our souls, the chariot of our Israel, and the horseman thereof?" No: the religion which he taught them had higher aims and higher objects. He had been the "minister by whom they had

believed," not upon him, but upon his and their sovereign Master and Almighty Saviour. His presence with him they doubtless valued as no common privilege ; but then they could do without him. Their " faith stood not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Some sorrow for his absence he would be glad to hail as a token of their affection ; but over-sorrow he would at once repress, as symptomatic of that dependence upon the creature, which undermined the very foundation of what his whole life was spent in building. " Was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul ?" Such is the language with which he would have rallied such faint-heartedness, and shamed such weakness, and with which he would have converted their vain regrets into a manly resolution to redouble their efforts, and renew their strength. " Now much more," he says, " in my absence, work out your own salvation." How emphatically in keeping with the context is, "*your own !*" There is in that very same development of the Christian life, in which teachers and names are unduly magnified, a certain gregarious tendency, a social instinct, which merges the individuality of each in a common partnership, and leaves the several members no property except their share in a general stock. They have nothing that they can carry with them,

if circumstances should separate them from their party. They belong to a company; and all that they possess is an interest in the property of the firm; and, if ejected from that firm, they have nothing. I have sometimes seen melancholy instances of religious partnerships dissolved. When certain associations have been broken up, and the man who, without knowing it, was living on and kept alive by the high-seasoned food of meetings, conferences, &c., has, like Philip, been called away from animating, bustling scenes, to go “unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” I have seen such a one languish as if that God whom he thought he loved, and that Saviour for whom he thought he had given up all, were confined to the little society, and located in the spot from which he had been severed; so that the heathen well might say, “Where is now thy God?” It is to save them from this snare that the apostle presses the Philippians to work out, each man for himself, his own salvation, to cultivate, each man for himself, a religion which connects him, individually and apart from all others, with his God.

And here I would observe that the very withdrawal of those aids which men most passionately desire, often “happens rather to the furtherance of the gospel,” and to its full establishment in

their hearts. The member—suppose of some careless circle or worldly family—awakes, for the first time, to a sense of eternal things. He feels himself all alone. There are none who sympathize with him, who enter into his feelings, or who understand his case. When his heart is burdened he has “no place to flee unto; and no man careth for his soul.” He hears, perhaps, of some neighbouring household, some knot of associates near him, who “take sweet counsel together, and walk in the house of God as friends,” and thinks that, compared with his solitude, it would be an earthly heaven to have his lot amongst them. But we are bad judges of what is best for us. That individual may, nay, in all probability will, live to see that it was God’s distinguishing mercy which left him, at the commencement of his religious course, to grow up as “a root out of a dry ground,” and as a lonely plant, before him. It is true the sapling may find more shelter from the storm in the midst of a thickly-planted grove, than when exposed by itself to the fury of the wind. In the latter case the risk is, doubtless, greater: but without risk no prize worth gaining ever yet was won. And the plant that, all alone, outlives the tempest which sweeps along the plain, derives from each shock a firmer rooting in the soil: while above, it exults in the freedom of the

wide expanse, where its wildest shoots and most luxuriant branches meet no contact but from the yielding air. Thus, trying as the want of companionship may be in the beginning of a religious life, solitude is the best school for the deep religion of the heart. "It is good," says Jeremiah, "for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence." (Lam. iii. 27, 28.) And thus beautifully does the son of Sirach describe the manner in which wisdom guides the footsteps of her children. "At the first she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws. Then will she return the straight way unto him and comfort him, and show him her secrets." (Eccles. iv. 17, 18.)

But let us, as proposed, very briefly notice some of the grounds on which the apostle urges God's agency in us, as a motive why we should "work out our own salvation, with fear and trembling."

I. We may understand his meaning, as though he had said: "Stand in awe, and sin not; put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground; consider how solemn a matter you are engaged in; remember that every thought which tends to good, every whisper of conscience, every counsel, every expostulation

of the internal monitor ; all these are strivings of the Holy Spirit, scintillations of the divine Light, motions and energies of God within you." Of these visitations of God's grace we might almost literally speak in the language with which he warned his ancient people : " Behold, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not ; for he will not pardon your transgressions ; for my name is in him." (Ex. xxiii. 20, 21.) And these words : " He will not pardon your transgressions," may suggest a further sense in which we may take the doctrine of our text.

II. Since it is God that worketh in you, work out your own salvation wth fear and trembling ; for consider how fearful is the responsibility of one who has to account for the discharge of so high a trust, for the improvement of so vast a talent ! If " to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more ;" if " this be the condemnation, that light is come into the world," and men have therefore " no cloak for their sin," how aggravated must be the guilt that resists the motions, and quenches the inspirations of God, thus working in us ! Surely, to the contemners of such mercies we

may well apply that awful but unanswerable argument of the apostle ; “ He that despised Moses, law died, without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ?”

III. We may take these words as the language also of encouragement. It is true that, in so momentous a concern, the possibility of miscarriage should mingle our assurance with fear and trembling. But my text contains that on which we can place a well-grounded confidence, that we shall not “ run in vain, neither labour in vain.” The apostle seems to address us in these terms. “ You have mighty foes to grapple with : you wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. If, then, this battle were to be fought, if this warfare were to be waged with your own weapons, and in your own strength, you might well despair. You might, as your only resource, however vain the hope, send an ambassage, and desire conditions of peace. But you are not called to this unequal,

to this hopeless contest. No, you are in alliance with Omnipotence, and confederate with the powers of heaven. Your help is laid on one that is mighty: Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. Be faithful to thy God, and no hand that is lifted against thee shall prosper. He that worketh in you will give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

IV. The passage under our consideration may, lastly, suggest a solemn and impressive motive to use all diligence to "make our calling and election sure." It shows the value of present opportunities, the importance of spreading our sails, while the breeze is fair, of working the works of God while it is called to-day, of watching "the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." If, indeed, there resided in us a moral strength or potency equal to the task, if we possessed an inherent and abiding energy, which we could exercise at will, and call into action by a volition of the mind, and if this could engage in successful combat with the enemies of our salvation, why then there would be some shadow of excuse for deferring our repentance to a more "convenient season." But let us remember that it is in God's strength alone, and not our own,

that we can hope for victory in the mighty contest for our soul's salvation. If, while He worketh in us to will and to do, we neglect to obey his motions, to stir up his gift, and to co-operate with his Spirit, we cannot command these favouring seasons to return. We cannot, at what time we please, "ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above." No: "while the word is nigh thee in thy mouth and in thy heart," seize and keep possession of the inestimable prize. While, my brethren, you have light, walk as children of the light. It is not you but God that makes that sun to rise upon your heart; and, if it now goes down, it may set to you for ever. All may depend upon the present moment: "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation;" "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." While the way is still open to the tree of life, approach it, and put forth your hand, and take of its immortal fruit, and eat, and live for ever.

S E R M O N I V .

ON THE THIEF ON THE CROSS.

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” LUKE xxiii. 43.

IT is related of the gay, the witty, the accomplished but profligate and infidel Earl of Rochester, that he was converted to God, simply by hearing the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. And it is added, that when his own eyes were opened, he expressed his astonishment how it was possible for persons, who professed to believe in revelation, to listen, day after day, to such overwhelming descriptions of the sufferings of the Son of God, without being suitably influenced in their lives and conversation. And assuredly if such were a reasonable cause of wonder, it is still more difficult on any ordinary principle to account for the startling fact, that the

very chapter which you have heard read this day, and from which my text is taken, should fail to secure the devoted attachment, and to win the whole heart of every man who hears it, and acknowledges it to be true. All the sorrows and sufferings of your Saviour are in these words brought, as it were, to their painful crisis.

Saint Matthew, in the parallel passage of his Gospel, seems to intimate that all the trials and hardships of his former life, from the manger in which his infant form was laid, up to the present scene, were comparatively as nothing. "*He began*," says he, "to be sorrowful and very heavy;" Matt. xxvi. 37; and St. Mark in like manner, "*he began* to be sore amazed and very heavy," xiv. 33. Both evangelists describe his heart as so full that, in spite of all his patience, it burst forth into those affecting words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." But none of the sacred writers present such heightened pictures of the man of sorrows, as St. Luke. Let us contemplate one of them. "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more

earnestly : and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke xxii. 41—44. But the sharpest pang, except the last, which the blessed Jesus felt, was his being "numbered with the transgressors,"—when "they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left." That He shrunk with inward horror at such companionship, and felt in all its bitterness the cruelty which imposed it, I judge from the circumstance that it was this which drew from Him the deep-toned prayer, "Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do." For it was thus that He relieved the swelling of his bosom—it was thus that he gave vent to the emotions which taunts and cruelty excited—it was thus that He resented wrongs and paid back injuries ; even by praying that his persecutors might never feel the miseries which they inflicted, and that with the stripes which they so mercilessly laid on Him, they might themselves be healed.

Between these two malefactors, in outward circumstances so closely parallel, how wide was the spiritual gulf which interposed ! To superficial view they presented the appearance of the exactest counterparts, which could be selected from the human family. Both transgressors against the same law, guilty of the same offence,

condemned by the same sentence, dying at the same moment, the same painful and ignominious death. But this circumstantial nearness, only enhanced the vastness of their moral distance. And thus it is in the general course of things, and in this world of antagonistic forces, of counter exhibitions, of lights and shades. If we would take the very extremes of intrinsic character, we shall find them best developed in cases where there is the most entire coincidence, in all the externals of position. For where circumstances are unlike, and opportunities widely varying, moral differences may be more or less the consequences and the results of these. But where of two plants sown in the same soil, nurtured by the same hand, and watched with the same anxiety and care, the one brings forth grapes, and the other wild grapes, we can resolve it into nothing but radical and essential contrariety, into the one being "a noble vine, wholly a right seed," the other the degenerate plant of a "strange vine."

Is it mere fancy to suppose it possible, that this narrow world which we inhabit contains the highest and the lowest of all the rational creation—that the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ may, in virtue of that joint inheritance, and of that identification whereby they become one with Christ and Christ with them, ascend up to where

their all-gracious Head is gone before, and reign with Him above all dominions, principalities, and powers in heavenly places? And is it unreasonable to conjecture that those for whom the blood of the eternal Son of God was shed, and who repaid his sufferings for them with scorn, who neglected his salvation and trampled on his mercy, may betray a depth of malignity, vileness, and ingratitude, with which no other order of created spirits had been or ever could be chargeable or charged? Upon the utmost verge, and the remotest opposite points of these contrasted classes, then, the two thieves upon the cross appear to stand; and to be thus the extremes of these extremes. Of the penitent thief Bishop Taylor thus speaks: "He had at that time the greatest piety in the world, except that of the blessed Virgin, and particularly had such a faith, that all the ages of the Church could never show the like." And, after enumerating some of his peculiar graces, he adds, "And in this I consider, that besides the excellency of some of these acts, and the goodness of all, the like occasion for so exemplary faith never can occur." Of the same favoured individual Bishop Hall also says. "He that before had nothing in his eye but present death and torture, is now lifted up above his cross in a blessed ambition; 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into

thy kingdom.' Is this the voice of a thief, or of a disciple? Give me leave, O Saviour, to borrow thine own words; 'Verily I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.' He saw thee hanging miserably by him, and yet styles thee Lord; he saw thee dying, yet talks of thy kingdom; he felt himself dying, yet talks of a future remembrance. O faith stronger than death, that can look beyond the cross at a crown; beyond dissolution, at a remembrance of life and glory! Which of thine eleven was heard to speak so gracious a word to thee in these thy last pangs? After thy resurrection, and knowledge of thine impassible condition, it was not strange for them to talk of thy kingdom; but, in the midst of thy shameful death, for a dying malefactor to speak of thy reigning, and to implore thy remembrance of himself in thy kingdom, it is such an improvement of faith as ravisheth my soul with admiration. O blessed thief, that hast thus happily stolen heaven!"

Such is the position in which these high authorities would place one of these convicted malefactors. While I believe that both men and angels would with one consent raise the other to the bad eminence of being one of the worst, if not the worst, of all the degenerate sons of Adam. For if incorrigible badness of heart, if wanton

wickedness cruel as the grave, could have an ample field for their full development, this unhappy man had found it; a field on which the worst passions of the soul could stretch themselves to dimensions which neither earth nor hell had seen before. Where the mind is thoroughly obdurate, there is no tendency in sufferings to soften or subdue it. Indeed one of the great tests of "what manner of spirit we are of" is the way in which afflictions act upon us. With the better portion of mankind their effect is to humble and meliorate the heart. With the other portion they only add fuel to the flame of evil passions. Thus does this refiner's fire work upon the human mass: it separates the genuine ore, and leaves nothing but dregs and dross behind it. Put then to this test, what is the result in the case of the impenitent thief? The only vent which he can find for the agonies which racked his frame, was to pour forth the bitterness of malice and cruelty upon the meek sufferer, who was bearing his own miseries with such lamb-like patience. "One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." What aggravated even this wanton inhumanity, was that it outraged one of the finest instincts of our nature, namely, to feel for those who drink of the same cup of trial, and are partakers of the same suffer-

ings, as ourselves. It was this which drew from the other malefactor the following righteous expostulation. "The other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" As much as to say, "If thou canst not be drawn by the cords of a man; if no compassion can touch thy heart; if no drop of human kindness lingers in thy breast, art thou as dead to the sterner, as to the softer passions of the soul? 'Dost thou not fear God?' Dost thou dare in the presence of that merciful and all-powerful Being to act a part, to exhibit a scene so abhorrent to his nature, so hateful in his eyes?"

Such were the just reproaches which one of these sufferers cast upon the other. For assuredly, if God be essential love, of all the evil passions which defile the human soul, those which are directly opposed to love, must be most at enmity with his nature. It is an awful thing to act with cruelty in the presence of a God of mercy; to "boast ourselves in mischief before Him whose goodness endureth continually;" to trample upon those who are in our power in the face of that irresistible Omnipotence within whose grasp we live and move and have our being. No man can expect from God what he would not himself grant if he had it in his power. No man can pray for

that mercy which he would wantonly withhold. And therefore we may thus accommodate these words: "Whatsoever ye would that *God* should do unto you do ye as far as ye are able to your fellow-men and fellow-creatures." This great principle is part and parcel of that prayer which Christ has taught us—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive them that trespass against us." The same eternal rule of righteousness is more fully opened out, where our Lord emboldens and invites us to pray for every blessing we can want; subjoining as an indispensable condition the words which I have already quoted. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Well then, may it be said to every one who is proud or oppressive, tyrannical or overbearing, implacable or unmerciful, "Dost thou not fear God?" Dost thou not know that all thy deeds are done before that Being who is the helper of the friendless, and the avenger of the meek; that "whoso toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye;" that "He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor?"

The charity which this dying penitent evinces, can be equalled only by his deep conviction of his own sinfulness, and willing susception of his pains.

It is one thing in theory to confess that we deserve the sorest chastisements, or under actual trials, if they be tolerable, to admit the justice of the dispensation. But it is another thing, and requires a victorious faith, when under the pangs and anguish of the Cross, transfixed by nails and hanging by our bleeding wounds to the accursed tree, then to feel that it is but our due, to set our seal to the equity and righteousness of the sentence. I have indeed known an instance of a young man who for a time forgetting the guide of his youth and forsaking the covenant of his God, was in severe but tender mercy suddenly recalled by the messenger of death. By accident he was shot, and the whole contents of a heavy loaded piece were discharged into his body. I saw him lie bleeding, panting for life, torn and lacerated. Nevertheless he seemed at times almost to take pleasure in his own pangs, to side as it were against himself, not merely to feel from, but to feel with, the lashes which he bore, to deny himself his own pity, as if like Job he abhorred himself or were set forth as a living or rather dying comment on those mysterious expressions of St. Paul: "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what

vehement desire ; yea, what zeal ; yea, what revenge !”

It is indeed one of the most unequivocal signs of a heart duly humbled and sensible of its true condition, to read in all our afflictions, the handwriting of God against our sins ; and in proportion as the trial presses, to try deep for the cause within. It was thus that the widow of Zarephath saw in the death of her child but the shadow of her past offences. “ And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God ? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son ?” This is genuine humility. Not the mere general confession, however true, that we all are sinners, but the deep feeling that of sinners we are chief. Not dividing the blame and casting it on human nature in the lump, but bewailing our own individual personal corruption, which we know (and in this respect we can know ourselves alone) to be exceeding sinful, without palliation, and without excuse. It was thus that this bright example did not screen himself under the general indictment, and escape the charges of his own conscience in the crowd of a degenerate species. No : he contrasts his own guilt with the innocence of his fellow-sufferer ; he admits his own inferiority, not merely his positive, but his comparative demerits.

“We indeed justly ; for we receive the due reward of our deeds : but this man hath done nothing amiss.”

It would require to have been present, and to be a spectator of this tragic scene, to take the full measure of this bold and heroic confession. All hopes of mitigation or release (hopes which may have sharpened the revilings of his fellow) were thereby blasted. Every provocative was held out to increase and aggravate, if that were possible, the torments he endured. For what did that proclamation of Christ’s guiltlessness amount to ? It was in fact to assert, in the face of the whole Jewish people, and of the authorities both military and civil, that the sentence had been unjust, that they were at that moment shedding the innocent blood, and of mere malicious wickedness inflicting tortures upon a righteous man for things which he knew not. Let us then put these circumstances together, and can we conceive a nobler example of one who was ready “with constancy to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice, and patiently to suffer for the truth’s sake?”

But still, in all this, there might have been a development of natural feeling only, though in its highest and most generous form. For up to this point he seems ignorant of the exalted nature of the person whose innocence he asserted. “This man,” said he, “hath done nothing amiss.” Faith

was not in exercise; but this chosen vessel was now in transition; he was not far from the kingdom of God; his foot was on the threshold of the palace of eternity.

What are the laws of separation and distinction on the one hand, or of correspondence and sympathy on the other hand, which subsist between the natural man and the spiritual man which unite in one person, we are in our present state, too blind to understand. We know not how it is, that when we address the unconverted, and are in the very act of telling them that they cannot see the kingdom of God; that when they give an earnest attention, and nature is doing its best, suddenly a new principle, foreign to nature, will start into life and make the blind to see and the deaf to hear. How this transfiguration occurs we know not. All we can say is, that the breath of life is present, because its effects are there; but whence it cometh or whither it goeth we cannot tell. We know that it is the Spirit that quickeneth, but how He is pleased to act we have no faculties to perceive.

Still it would appear that when, in our natural state, we honestly and faithfully "do what we can;" when the outward man puts forth the best energies he owns, and rises to his highest moral elevation, that, by some secret laws of sympathy, those springs are touched, which awaken the new

man into life, and that thus, when the sacrifice is laid in order upon the altar, the fire of acceptation comes down from heaven, that when the iron is red hot, God strikes with his hammer, and the spark of a supernatural faith comes forth. If there be, in the nature of things, such a transition of nature into grace, we seem to catch the very moment of this transmutation in the case of this favoured man, when his human feelings kindled with a celestial flame. He had seen and watched every movement of the lamb-like sufferer who hung upon the neighbouring cross. He had witnessed the anxiety which in the midst of his own pains He had shown for his sorrowing mother; and the shelter which He had been careful to provide her under the humble roof of the friend He loved. He had heard his prayer for the forgiveness of his persecutors. Never, he thought, had man spoken like this man. Such meekness and gentleness he had never seen nor conceived before. Perhaps he had already been a witness of the unjust sentence forced from Pilate; and the denial of all fair justice which had marked the whole proceedings of his trial. But at all events no such previous vindication was required. This acute observer knew that such prayers, such accents of forgiveness and love, could never flow from a guilty bosom; such innocence could not beam

from the countenance, if there were an accusing conscience in the breast.

Under exciting circumstances how quickly can love wind its cords around the heart ! How rapidly can it run up into an attachment which neither life nor death can sever ! So it was in the instance of this fellow-sufferer with the Lord of glory. Though as yet he knew not that it was the attraction of Omnipotence which drew him, it was still an attraction stronger than the agonies of his cross ; one which forced from him the assertion of the innocence of Jesus, whatever increase of torment that assertion might bring upon himself. All this, I grant, was but high-wrought natural feeling towards a wronged and injured man. It was human virtue at its most exalted pitch, just at the point where two worlds meet, and fidelity is sublimated into faith. Here light from above begins to dawn : the brightness of the Father's glory begins to shine in the face of Jesus : the Godhead beams through the veil of flesh. And now the Holy Spirit descends into the compassionate bosom of the repentant thief : and he who vindicated his unknown Saviour's innocence as a man, now in spirit calls Him Lord : now with his heart believes, and with his mouth exclaims to the dying malefactor at his side, " My Lord and my God."

“Remember me,” says he, “when thou comest into thy kingdom.” If we consider the tumultuous scenes amidst which these words were spoken, and their subject matter so far above out of the sight of the encircling throng, we see as it were pictured before us the power of prayer, and the nature of prayer; that secret intercourse which the believing spirit holds with heaven, as if this noisy busy world were one wide waste, or depth of solitude, where none else than God and he were present.

That wonderful conversion which taught this penitent to call his Saviour Lord, did not overwhelm his consciousness, that within that bleeding form there throbbed a human heart, alive to every interest, and true to every sympathy, which man is formed to feel for man. He knew how his Saviour’s sufferings had won upon his own heart, and a common nature told him that that tender concern was mutual. He had a trembling but delightful trust, that his partnership in sorrow gave him some claim, not upon the justice, but upon the humanity, of Him who is not ashamed to call us brethren. He felt not this as a merit, but still as a plea, to which his Saviour’s compassion would not refuse to lend an ear; that plea which God’s boundless love emboldens us to use, namely, that his past mercies are but earnest of those to

come. All this is embodied in the emphatic word "Remember." "Remember, O Lord, when seated upon clouds of glory, and all thy holy angels are around thee—remember thy companion in tribulation, the poor malefactor who suffered by thy side, and bore with thee the ignominy and the pains of crucifixion. Remember the sympathy which thou didst condescend to feel, the words of compassionate interest which we exchanged from cross to cross; words which seemed, while those three long hours of anguish were slowly passing, to say, we would relieve one another if we could, and that as we had nothing else to give, we gave our pity. Remember, O Lord, how in that season of darkness I first confessed thy innocence, and then acknowledged thee to be the Lord. Remember that when thy disciples forsook thee, and thy familiar friends disowned thee; that when fat bulls of Basan enclosed thee in on every side—when the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel against thee—when the people with one voice exulted in thy torments—when the high authorities forgot their dignity that they might insult thee with the vilest taunts—when the soldiers forgot their generous natures that they might oppress and trample upon one who offered no resistance and stood on no defence—when all hell had risen upon thee, and God had

barred the doors of heaven against thee—it was in that ‘day of trouble, and of rebuke and of blasphemy,’ that I confessed thy innocence, and foretold thy coming glory. ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.’ ”

Such was the prayer which entered into the ears, and which touched the heart, of the blessed Jesus. And it is granted beyond all the suppliant could have asked or thought. His petition embraced but the hope of some vague and future blessing which his Saviour would not deny him, if in all his royal state and splendour he would still keep in mind, the poor malefactor who once had shared his cross. This was the utmost his fondest wishes had aspired to. But he addressed one who has “prepared for them that love Him what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Such was the gracious promise. And O with what joy, what gratitude, and what glad surprise must it have been received! If we, amidst the comforts we enjoy, look back upon Adam’s paradise, and measure the immensity of our loss by the soft though powerful attraction by which these abodes of innocence can draw the heart ;—how inexpressible must have been the delight of one in all the pangs of crucifixion, at hearing that a few short

hours would introduce him into a celestial paradise, the still purer and brighter counterpart of that which our first parents' sin had forfeited. But no picture of our imagination could do justice to this subject. It is best then to decline the attempt; and in conclusion to draw a few practical lessons from the history which is here before us.

I. We learn that no sinner, if he feel the dawn of penitence in his breast, need despair. Nor let such a one be disposed to say, "O even if forgiveness were extended to me, it is too late at this last hour, for the 'Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots.'" Not so. We see here with what rapidity the saving sight of Jesus can change the heart, and make a dying malefactor meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

II. We learn, there is no intermediate state between the grave and a joyful immortality. Surely if any penitent could have required some cleansing process, if it were necessary for any one to pass through some medium of purification, it could in no case have been more indispensable than in that of a man who was dying by a public execution, to which his crimes had brought him. "But what saith the Scripture?" "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

III. This delightful portion of God's word tends

to make us feel that death does not translate us into some austere and awful region, foreign to our sympathies, peopled by no familiar objects, cheered by no warm contacts with things which we have been taught to love. For what is the prospect which opens to this favoured penitent? A paradise, a garden, the very thing which innocent and unperverted minds delight in here below, and which from childhood to old age the pure in heart enjoy. Thus it is that scenes in heaven are prefigured to us by all that nature throws around us here. Thus it is that when we cease to be spectators of things below, their celestial correspondencies and echoes will take up the wondrous tale and tell how in heaven and earth "all things are double;" "and there are two and two one against another." Surely those scenes must be connatural to man, which He who knew what was in man, has provided as the residence best suited to make him happy. Surely those scenes must be intimate to our hearts, in which Christ Himself abides, and in that very body too which went in and out amongst us, which was seen in our streets, and in all the familiar walks of life.

IV. We have lastly in this passage a proof that friends will meet again; or rather an exemplification of that most delightful truth. This repentant sinner was but the first fruits of a glorious

harvest; of those who, when the hour of their release arrives, will be with their beloved Lord in paradise; and if all with Him, with one another, bound by ties which no lapse of time, no length of exhaustless years can sever. O what happy meetings, what blissful greetings will be there! How will those who parted in sorrow behold each other once more in joy! Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, mutual friends which cords still closer than those of blood united! But still, in the midst of those interchanges of unaltered and unalterable affection, one ruling passion will burn in every bosom without a rival. All hearts and all eyes will turn to Him who purchased this blessedness for them; who loved them with an everlasting love; who for their sakes was led as a lamb to the slaughter; who “for the joy that was set before him in their salvation, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

SERMON V.

ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEART.

“If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god ; shall not God search this out ? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.”—PSALM xliv. 20, 21.

It is scarcely possible for words more emphatically to express than these, the fulness of a heart conscious of its integrity towards God. The appeal is made at once to Him. The utter folly and delusion of any effort to deceive Him, is expressed with all the glow of pious feeling, and with all the ardour of genuine devotion. “If we have forgotten the name of our God.” Where love to any object is deeply seated in the heart, to remember that object is not merely to be cognizant of its existence, but to be sensible of all that it has been to us. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let

my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Such is the language which the constant and devoted heart will ever address to Him, for whose sake alone it was that the children of the captivity wept, when "by the rivers of Babylon they remembered Zion."

To forget God, was not, in the Psalmist's view, to lose that impression of his Being which all nature forces upon the mind ; to close his ears to that voice with which the heavens declare his glory, or to shut his eyes against that grand display by which "the firmament showeth his handywork." No : David's remembrances of God were remembrances of all the benefits which He had bestowed upon him :—remembrances of his best and earliest friend who had been "with him ever since he was born, and who had been his hope upon his mother's breasts ;"—remembrances of mercies, as he himself declares, "more in number than he was able to express ;"—remembrances of comforts that refreshed his soul, of "days in God's courts better than a thousand ;"—of Sabbaths of delight, of seasons more to be desired than gold, of moments sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, of bright mornings of thanksgiving, and continued nights of prayer and praise. These were the re-

collections which forgetfulness of God would, in the Psalmist's estimation, tear and sever from the heart.

We know that, in earthly connexions, the forgetfulness which wounds the soul does not imply that a friend has brought himself to think, that the being once so close to his bosom and intimate to his heart, has ceased to live. Nay, it does not necessarily imply that acquaintanceship has been dropped, or frequent intercourse suspended. If, indeed, our faithless friends were transported beyond the seas, and were to us as inhabitants of another world, or if oblivion could sweep away all records of them from the mind ; then indeed we should not feel how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to be forgotten by one whom we had too fondly loved. But the sting of the wound, the bitterness of the trial, is to retain the acquaintance, and to lose the friend. To be tied, as it were, to the body, when the soul has left it ; to see indifference in those eyes which once had beamed with tenderness, and lit up with joy to welcome our approach ; to hear those accents which were once the echo of a glowing heart, now changed to the voice of strangers, to whom it were vain to look for sympathy, or claim an interest beyond the cold and common courtesies of life. Such are the pains which those experience who have been for-

gotten by a friend. And such were the thoughts of David's heart, when he spoke of forgetfulness of God. He did not mean thereby to forget that there is a God, but to forget what God is, and what He is to us. To cease from the remembrance of his name, was not, in his mind, to be heedless of an empty sound, but to lose the recollection of that name, inclusive of all good, which He proclaimed to Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."

If then the remembrance of God be, in this view of it, not a mere deposit in the storehouse of the intellect, but a vital apprehension of his nature, and of his all-cheering presence; if it be "God sensible to the heart,"—"Let us," in the words of the apostle, "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

There is a constant tendency in our fallen nature, to slide down from the life and reality of eternal things, into the mere signs that signify, and language that expresses them. And thus, if we do not take pains, by watchfulness and prayer, to hold fast the substance of religion, it will gradually melt away, and leave us with nothing but its shadow in our hands. This process is so gra-

dual and so deceptive, that we may sometimes have actually undergone it, without suspecting that our impressions are now but the faint echo of what they were. And this declension is often much accelerated by a sort of notion (not so much an opinion as a feeling,) that conversion and religion are the same ; that when we turned to God the work was done, and not merely entered on. Thus the conscience is satisfied with a review of convictions formerly impressed upon the heart. And it is taken for granted all is well, because it once was well. I do not here contemplate the doctrine of final perseverance. The delusion which I mean is common to those who uphold, and who oppose, that doctrine. It is an error into which those who theoretically maintain the possibility of forfeiting our election, may fall as well as others. It is not, as I said before, a doctrine which I speak of. It is a state of mind into which there is constant danger of our sinking, unless there be great care to feed the flame of religion which once was lighted in the heart. Without this care, men who have experienced a real work of grace upon their souls ; who have felt the pardoning love of God ; who have received the spirit of adoption ; whose souls have magnified the Lord, and whose spirits have rejoiced in God their Saviour ; who have delighted them-

selves in the Lord ; who have tasted the joys of his presence, and the heaven of communion with God ;—even these may by little and little grow into the mere remembrance of the things, unless they refresh and perpetuate them by daily supplies of grace. The religion of such persons is not what the mathematicians describe a line to be, the flowing of a point—it is the mere point itself. It is not like that spiritual Rock which followed the Israelites through the wilderness ; but like some well of living water, which refreshed them for a moment in the desert, but which they have left behind them, and can revisit no longer, save in the imaginings of the mind. Thus I am persuaded, that we may decline into a state in which, while we talk of religion, its spiritual nature, its essential characters, its life-giving power, its fruits of meekness, purity, tranquillity, and love, are gone. We may “ speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ! ” and yet, at the same time, may merely draw upon past experiences, and describe anything but the present feelings of our minds and sentiments of our hearts. The living scenes of true religion may have passed away ; but we saw them once, and we can therefore recal them to our memory, and sketch them out for others. Perhaps, indeed, there is no surer mode of ascertaining whether our religion is or is

not the mere shadow of a former substance, than this. Is *conversation* the field or the occasion on which our most animated impressions are experienced? Do we flag in the closet ; and kindle into fervour when called upon to talk on the subject of religion ? If so, I know no clearer symptom that we are trading in copies of our original impressions ; that we are mere historians of past experience ; that ours is a religion of memory ; and that conversation animates the mind because it sends it back to former days, and retouches it with the recollection of things that were.

But I have been led insensibly to speak of another kind of remembrance from that which the psalmist had in view, when he deprecated the thought of forgetting God. *I* speak of the memory of the head which can retain only the shadows of divine things. *He* spoke of the memory of the heart, which realizes and holds fast their living substances. This was the sacred and vital apprehension of all that to him was dear, which David identified with the remembrance of his God. It is the absence of this which he disclaims in the animated language of my text. And had his disclaimer been confined to this alone, he would doubtless have at once dismissed the subject in the spirit, if not in the very letter, of the Patriarch's emphatic language : " If we have for-

gotten the name of the Lord our God," " then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." Or he would have repeated in his own impassioned words, " Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it ; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust."

But he well knew that there can be no vacuum in the human breast ; that the heart of man must have some object ; that if we leave the fountain of living waters, we shall infallibly hew out for ourselves cisterns, though they be broken cisterns, that can hold no water. To some master we must be servants ; to some God we must bow down. To something out of ourselves we must look. We are impelled to it by the laws of our being, and by the requisitions of our nature. We are driven to it, we are forced to it, by the utter want of anything within us which can satisfy those intense desires and boundless appetites which He who formed us has bound up in the primitive constitution, and in the very essence of the soul. " If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god." The one follows necessarily from the other. If the felt presence of the true God leaves the heart, his place will at once be occupied. If the right-

ful Sovereign vacates his throne, at that very moment the usurper will take possession.

In the song of Moses, where he speaks with such exquisite pathos of God's mercies to his people, he reckons it as one of their crowning blessings, that no foreign lords had dominion over them. "The Lord's portion," says he, "is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead them, and there was *no strange god* with him." The contrast which is pointed out in these last words, as well as in my text, suggests to the mind a thought of pregnant meaning and of touching interest. All other gods but the God who made us, are strangers to the human breast. The traveller in foreign climes, the wanderer in distant regions, knows how deserted and how all alone the heart can feel itself in a land of strangers. Man was originally designed for fellowship, for companionship, and for all the charities of social life. He was formed with propensities and instincts not only to love his fellow man as man,

but to bind himself in closer attachments and special sympathies which grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength ; to acknowledge the claims of early friendship, of family endearment, of home and all the tender associations and fond remembrances which gather round that earthly centre of the heart. It is thus that man, when called upon to “ leave his country, his kindred, and his father’s house,” and when far from the country that gave him birth, the land of his childhood and of his fathers,—experiences a loneliness of heart which none but strangers feel. Amongst a “ people of a strange speech, and of an hard language whose words he cannot understand,” however full his heart may be, he can freely communicate with none. But even if he could, as far as mere words can go, give utterance to his thoughts, he has no companion who can enter into the peculiarities of his case, who can feel a brother’s interest in his concerns, who can remind him or be reminded by him of things that were and of days that are past. He has none who can revisit with him, in imagination, the scenes which he has left behind him. Thus it is not good for man, as it respects his companionship with man, to be alone ; to wander in that physical solitude where neither friend nor foe is near, or in that moral solitude where all around

are strangers. It is not good, because he is formed for converse, because his wants require it, and his instincts point to it. There is a compartment in the mechanism of our nature, there is a space or capacity in the human soul, designed and left there by the great Artificer that it may be filled by human affections, friendships, and attachments; by that which is inferior to the love of God alone, and is like unto it—the love of man our fellow, our counterpart, and our second self, as of our own souls. But when we are debarred of associations which give vent to this powerful, though secondary passion of the soul, we feel that pressure, so painful to the heart where its functions are impeded, and where it strives to force a passage through unnatural or obstructed channels. Such is the state of the man whose philanthropy has no field of exercise; who is constrained to dwell amongst those who are to him but lifeless images of men, who have mouths and speak not, ears and hear not, whose hearts can beat in no sympathy with his own.

If, then, this aching void be felt within, when no supplies are found or food provided to satisfy the lesser appetites of the soul; if strangers can only pain and disappoint, when they would occupy the room which nature has reserved for special unions and beloved friends;—how much heavier

must be the pressure, how much more intense and intolerable the sense of want, of loneliness, and of desolation, when the great law of spiritual nature is disobeyed, when the vast desires of man's immortal soul fail of the object for which they were formed ; when he mistakes the shadow for the substance of essential good ; and when he casts himself and all his burdens upon those who fling them back upon his heart. Thus abundantly is the declaration of the Psalmist verified, " Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god." No cause and effect can be more unalterably linked together, than that those who leave the Rock which alone can shelter and sustain them, must wander without repose or resting-place for the heart. All this is implied in those most emphatic words, "*a strange god.*" All the rivals of the living and true God, are foreigners and usurpers. They bear no real relation to man. There is no true sympathy between the soul and them. They are not connatural to the human heart. But between God and that nature which he constructed in the image of himself, there was a relationship and friendship as ancient as man's creation ; a friendship as old as the days when our first parents walked with God amidst the flowers of Paradise. And though that amity was sundered by our unfaithfulness, yet a way was opened by

which the soul could “return again unto its rest.” But till this re-union is effected, the heart can find no substitute for God, none to fill his place, none to induce the sweet contentment and calm repose it seeks; nothing to render us blessings to ourselves, or life worth living for. The soul thus severed from its rest is like the woman “who taketh strangers instead of her husband.” (Ezek. xvi. 32.) Or like her of whom the prophet speaks, “She shall follow after her lovers, but shall not take overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them.” (Hos. ii. 7.) Or like her of whom another prophet speaks, she shall “lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.” (Joel. i. 8.)

If thus touching and affecting are the considerations to which the expression “a strange god” naturally gives rise, the “lifting up the hands” to such presents also a thought pregnant with important meaning. To lift up the hands, is a familiar term to denote the act of solemn worship; and may be considered here as but synonymous with idolatry. And although the Psalmist had abundant cause, from the existing state of things around him, to deprecate and to disclaim that more palpable idolatry which consisted in serving the gods of the heathen, and bowing down to carved images; yet it is manifest that such was not the

sin contemplated in the passage under consideration. Doubtless he had not outward acts, but interior and hidden movements of the mind in view. For the former are openly displayed, and need no diligent inspection nor "searching out." He meant then the idolatry of the heart, that departing from the living God, that spiritual adultery, that vain pursuit of happiness out of Him, that primary and essential idolatry, of which the grosser idolatries of the heathen were but the material shadows, the natural consequences, and the sad results. And in this, as in every other instance, the cause lies deeper than the effect. For assuredly, if to approach a carved image or idol deity with genuflexions of the body, be a transgression in the sight of heaven; he who prostrates his soul before some foul passion or debasing vice, "hath the greater sin," and deserves "still greater damnation." Indeed there is no small error amongst us on this head. There is not unfrequently a loud cry against the supposed idolatry of the lips and of the knees from those whose unmeasured language and unbridled passions give no uncertain symptoms that they "have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face."

But to "stretch out the hands" may indicate not so much the attitude of solemn worship, as

the effort which we instinctively make in our distresses to lay hold upon the arm of some strong deliverer, or some firm support. It denotes an effort, such as that of the shipwrecked mariner, who, sinking amidst the waves, strives to catch some plank, or grasp some friendly hand, which may rescue him from the horrors of his impending fate. And oh ! that we could induce all thoughtless sinners to behold in this the image of themselves ! And yet the resemblance does not hold throughout. For the mariner may in his last extremity still be saved by the plank or hand he seeks. But *their* strange gods and idol vanities, even if these shadows could be embraced as solid substances, would only sink them deeper, and involve them in more hopeless ruin. “What will ye do,” says the prophet, “in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far ? to whom will ye flee for help ? and where will ye leave your glory ?” Surely imagination cannot paint a colouring too dark, or shades too black, to describe the state of him who, when his “fear cometh as desolation,” and his “destruction as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish come upon him,” has none but “strange gods” to fly to. It is now too late to call on Him who alone could prop his fainting head, or stop the bleeding of his heart. In righteous judgment God has declared

that He will “laugh at his calamity, and mock when his fear cometh.” Depressed in spirits, forlorn and languid, bowed down by calamity or wasted with disease, shall he address himself to his former gay companions in the words of Job, “Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God has touched me?” Alas! his friends are not like “brothers born for adversity.” The house of mourning is no scene for them. And besides, he can too well remember how he was ever ready, in his better days, to forsake like them the wretched, and to fly with disgust from the abodes of misery and from the haunts of woe. To whom or to what then shall he betake himself in “the cloudy and dark day,” or in the extremities of the hour of death? Shall he urge his claims upon the world? Shall he tell that hard master, how he had devoted youth and health and strength, and all that he could gather together, to its service? Shall he ask some requital for his pains, some consideration for having preferred the world to God, some pittance in exchange for his soul? Alas! the world has no more pity for the dying sinner than his gay companions have. But the world, even if willing to do justice, is insolvent. It has nothing to pay; less than nothing, I mean, as it respects the interests of an immortal being. For let it lavish

all its treasures, let it bestow itself and all that it inherits, upon one favourite servant; yet what would it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he had lost his own soul?

If such be the bitter fruits of spiritual idolatry; if it sow the certain seeds of misery in the soul, shall this be unknown to Him who is intimately and intensely cognizant of every trouble that invades the heart, and every sigh that heaves the bosom? God is pleased, in his dealings with us, to describe himself as if actuated by the feelings and passions of our nature. Throughout the Old Testament He anticipates, as it were, His incarnation; comes down to the level of our sympathies, and makes us feel that He is affected, "in all points like as we are," sin alone excepted. Thus, as in the case of Moses, He converses with us, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. Accordingly, the Psalmist appeals to God's knowledge of his heart, as if that knowledge were the result of diligent inquiry and close investigation; as if he arrived at truth by such steps and processes as conduct us to right conclusions. He does not speak as if all he thought, designed, and was, were, at one view, "naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom he had to do." He does not speak as if, God said, "Let there be light: and there was light," and all the deepest recesses

of his soul were, at once, discovered to his view. No: he does not overwhelm or overawe the mind by such an exhibition of the divine omniscience. The portrait which he presents is drawn in softer colours. He speaks of God, it is true, after the manner of men, but on that account in terms which vibrate with every feeling, and every chord within us. "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god, shall not God search this out? for He knoweth the secrets of the heart."

There are two senses, I think, in which these latter expressions may be taken. They may imply that the idolatry which the Psalmist had in view, being that of the heart, God cannot fail intuitively to detect it; because every secret of the heart is known to Him. Nothing can be more true than this. But still I conceive that it is not the sense, or at least the only sense, in which the Psalmist's meaning may be taken. He describes God as looking into the heart, and discovering, not so much the idolatry itself, as the marks and tokens of idolatry which abide therein. He describes the great Physician as examining that organ, and detecting not so much the disease, as the symptoms of the disease, which impede its healthful action. Of course we allow that moral symptoms and moral diseases, that idolatry and all its bitter fruits,

that the heart and soul and life, all are revealed and held up in marvellous light to the inspection of God's omniscience. But as we said before, David speaks here of God after the manner of men. He represents Him as investigating, and inquiring, and forming his judgment on the evidence presented to Him. The case supposed is that of idolatry. God makes inquisition respecting it. And how does He do so? He examines into the state of the heart. He counts its pulsations and sounds its depths. He finds out all its secrets; and then judges whether its owner has or has not been forgetful of Him, and stretched out his hands to a strange god.

Nothing can be more affecting than the picture of God's goodness and infinite condescension, which is here portrayed. He visits that heart which he had formed for himself; whose hungering and thirsting he had imparted, whose vast capacities He had created, that He might fill them out of the exhaustless fountain of his own blessedness. He knows "the things that He hath prepared for them that love him." He knows that "great is the peace of his children;" that 'there is no want to them that fear him;' that 'happy are the people who are in such a case, yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.' But he finds the heart restless, com-

fortless, and distressed ; filled with cares and fears, anxieties and sorrows. He sees that it is desolate and in misery. He hears its silent whispering to itself, “ Why art thou so full of heaviness, why art thou so disquieted, O my soul ? ” Nor is He at a loss to discern why all these troubles are come upon it. It has forsaken him, and all its lovers have forsaken it. He contrasts this desolation with the blessings which He would have spread with lavish hand around it. As a tender parent, whose beloved child has given herself into the hands of one who only feigned affection but now has thrown the mask aside, compares, in the bitterness of his soul, the cold insulting treatment which she now receives, with the fondness which it had been his delight to show her ; and sees that in proportion as he trained and taught her to dwell in the bosom of indulgence, she is ill-suited and ill-prepared to bear the harsh repulses and unkind reproaches she daily meets with ; so does the blessed God describe his own paternal feelings towards his rebellious children. He contrasts the wretchedness they experience, the slavery to which they are reduced, the tyranny under which they groan in the hands of strange gods, with the fulness of his house, the perfect freedom of his service, the heaven which He had “ prepared for them from the foundation of the world.” After

such an inspection of the heart as my text supposes, we seem to hear Him complaining in the language of Hosea. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Or we seem to witness the recurrence of that affecting scene, when the Saviour "beheld the city and wept over it;" and when he burst forth into those touching and unrivalled strains, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

But, blessed be God, He to whom the heart is open, can not only discern, but cure, the distempers of the soul. If indeed we had God's justice alone to deal with, we might well seek, though in vain, some refuge from his all-seeing eye. We might "begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." But if we be true to ourselves, "the lot is fallen to us in a fair ground; yea, we have a goodly heritage." "Though our sins be as scarlet," we have a mercy seat to go to. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation

for our sins.” Through his great atonement “God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Let us then no longer dread the scrutiny of his eye. Let us rather supplicate and implore Him in the language of the psalmist, “Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart : prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” If we feel the load and misery of sin, there is help at hand ; there is a balm in Gilead and a Physician there. The closer He inspects the seat of pain, and examines the symptoms of our disease, the more effectually He can apply his healing medicines to the soul ; the more radical will be the cure : the more perfect will be the health and soundness to which His grace restores us ; the more thoroughly will he wash us from our iniquities and cleanse us from our sins.

SERMON VI.

ON THE TRINITY.

“And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and, lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.

“And lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”—*MATT.* iii. 16, 17.

“WHAT,” says Thomas a Kempis, “is a man the better, for entering into the sublime mysteries of the Trinity; if he want that meekness and humility without which he must displease the Trinity?” If moreover we would yield that service to the Triune God, which alone is acceptable in his sight, we must present to him the freewill offering of the heart. But we cannot love in obedience to a mere command. The affections will not move at our call, or at the call of duty; unless there be an attractiveness in the channels in which we would have them flow, unless the

objects to which we would point the heart, be such as the heart is formed to love. It is then one evidence of the divine original of the Scriptures, that they are everywhere true to this great law of nature. They demand no service which it is impossible for us to yield. If the love of God be insisted on as the first and great commandment, the sum of all duty, the substance of all blessedness, God is set forth in such characters of benignity and condescension, of moral excellence and perfection, as to render it impossible for the mind which realizes to itself the truth of that revelation, to resist the attractions of his goodness. Of this we have a striking instance, in the passage before us. This portion of Scripture has been appointed, by the Church, for Trinity Sunday, because it presents the Three Persons of the Godhead, so distinctly to our view. Let us then devote a few moments, to meditate on this important theme; let us turn aside and see this great sight." But before we do so, I would just observe that this fundamental doctrine, though immeasurably beyond all finite comprehension, is not a mystery just pointed at in Scripture, to impress the mind with slavish awe, and to render "the thick darkness in which God is" visible to our eyes. No: the revelation of a plurality of Divine Persons, is but a further development of the great truth that, "God

is love." Every light which Scripture throws upon the supreme object, is but a discovery of new mines and treasures of essential goodness. The unity of God presents to the mind, it is true, an exhaustless field of glory. But the prospect is but a vague expanse. It is like the face of nature seen in that early dawn which reveals the wide extent, but not the distinctive features, of the landscape. But in a little time the dawn will ripen into day, the light of this world will begin, as a giant, to run his course; a new creation will appear, and that which, like the primæval chaos was "without form and void," will separate and divide; the whole vast surface will be broken up into endless diversity, verdant fields, and peaceful homes and village spires, valleys standing thick with corn, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. And so it is with the light of Scripture truth. It brings out the character of God. That great unbounded object which to the eye of nature was but one monotony of brightness—vast, vague, and incomprehensible—now becomes legible and distinct, reveals its features, and opens out its treasures. Thus, while "In the power of the divine majesty we worship the unity," we "acknowledge in the glory of the eternal Trinity," all those endearing characters which render God familiar to the heart; which bind us by a threefold cord to

that everlasting covenant, in which peace, and pardon, and salvation, and happiness, and heaven, are secured to us for ever.

How amiable then is this exhibition of the Blessed Trinity ! The colours of this bright picture are taken from whatever is most tender and gentle, as well as most pure and undefiled, in nature. In describing objects spiritual, celestial, and divine, the Scriptures must speak after the manner of men. They must set before us “the invisible things of God,” by the analogies of things that are seen ; by their counterparts in nature ; by the reflections of divine realities in the mirror of this earth ; by the shadows, which the substances above cast upon the surface of this lower world. Thus the Blessed Trinity in the passage before us is pictured forth, by emblems and figurative representations. Let us consider for a few moments what these emblems are, and let us derive from them new motives to “wonder, love, and praise.”

“And Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water.” That “He who knew no sin”—that He, who, to use the language of a pilgrim once standing on the banks of Jordan, “was purer than the water itself ;” that He who was “God over all blessed for ever ;” that He should have submitted to the baptism of repent-

ance and remission, is but a part of, and is only in full keeping and consistency with, that infinite abasement to which the King of Glory came down for our sakes, from the throne of the majesty on high. But in what character *did* the second person in the Trinity appear on the occasion? For this purpose let us turn to the first chapter of St. John; where in reference to the same transaction, the Baptist thus entitles Him. "Behold," saith he, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

We have here, then, the blessed Jesus under the figure of "the Lamb." *This* title He assumed, because in Him was the fulfilment of all the Mosaic expiations. The lambs offered under the law, were but the types and representations of Him. That which was daily offered both morning

and evening, signified the constant and continued efficacy of His priesthood, and the paschal lamb shewed forth pre-eminently His great atonement. But it was not merely in reference to these imperfect types and shadows of the all-perfect antitype and all-sufficient sacrifice, that John thus styled Him the Lamb of God. Under this emblem was represented his gentleness, his endurance of injuries, his unresisting patience, his meek submission. "He is," says the prophet, "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." The same character He would himself impress on those whom he sends forth in his name, as the imitators and images of his own long-suffering. "Behold I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves."

Nor does He disdain, to our great and endless comfort, in the midst of the glories which surround his throne, in the bosom of that light before which potentates fall down and angels veil their faces—nor does He disdain still to be recognised under that soft and gentle appellation, and to be remembered and adored as the Lamb once pierced for our transgressions and bleeding for our sins. "And I beheld," says St. John, "and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had

been slain.”—Rev. v. 6. “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”—8, 9. And again in words, if possible more beautiful than these, the same apostle, after speaking of those who had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, thus proceeds. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—Rev. vii. 16, 17. The character under which the second person of the Trinity appeared to John, when humbling himself to his Baptism, was, we thus perceive, that of the Lamb of God. “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water;” and, as St. Luke informs us, “he prayed;” and at the bidding of that prayer, the sky is parted and “the heavens are opened, and the third person of the

Trinity, God the Holy Ghost, comes down—the Dove descends with gentle motion upon the head “of the Lamb.” Poets and painters, all those who would touch the softest springs, and stir up the purest affections of our nature, have made the dove their favourite theme; and described with all the magic of their art, its innocency, its meekness, its tenderness, and the constancy of its love. The dove was chosen, above all that fly in the open firmament of heaven, to bring the olive branch, the first fruits of the reviving earth and of a rescued world, to Noah. And as innocence and true cheerfulness go hand in hand together, so does the “Song of songs” associate the dove, with whatever in nature can most gladden the heart, and awake the soul to gratitude and joy. “Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.”

Such, then, are the emblems which the word of God employs, the objects which it selects from all the varieties of nature’s stores, the plants which it culls from all the fields of God’s creation, to set before us, as far as earthly images are able, that spotless purity, love, and peace, which form the characters, and dwell in the bosom of God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. But, is there

no other object which the compass of terrestrial things can furnish, as gentle and as tranquillizing to the soul as those already noticed? When these are plucked, has the garden of the Lord no flower remaining, so fragrant to the smell, and pleasant to the eyes? Does nature afford, amidst all her wealth, no emblem so soft, and so soothing to the heart, as the lamb or dove? Yes, there is one remaining—it is the language of a parent's love, the gratulation of a father's heart. And such is the manifestation which my text contains of the first person of the eternal Trinity. “Lo! a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” But, are we right in thus classing this last in the category of emblems? No: the lamb and the dove are images, indeed, of the things intended, signs of the things signified. But this is the blessed reality, the glorious truth itself. This is no figure. Attend, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken: “Hark, my soul, it is the Lord:” it is no earthly sound; it is the word of God, and not of man. “Lo! a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Oh! what treasures of divinest goodness are opened here—what mines of tenderness—what depths of love! The high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, is pleased to feel new complacencies in his co-equal Son. It is

not merely the ceaseless flow of his everlasting love which is here expressed; but a special instance of that infinite affection. And for what, then, is it that God is thus pleased with his own uncreated image? Is it because He has put forth some new act of illimitable omnipotence? Is it because He has created some fresh constellation of new-born worlds, and raised up new orders of intelligences to be sharers of his joy, and spectators of his glory? Is it because he has opened new fields for the diffusion of his own exhaustless happiness? Is it because he has caused the day-spring to arise upon the face of some dark abyss, and said, "Let there be light, and there was light?" No: it was because He humbled Himself—because He made Himself of no reputation, because He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. But, perhaps, at no period of this amazing condescension, was the abasement of incarnate Deity more conspicuous in the eyes of heaven, than at this moment. Never was it more attractive to the heart of God, than when He who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," ascended from the mystical waters of his baptism. This was the emphatic moment of his history, which John associated with that title which is above every name, "the Lamb of God, that taketh

away the sin of the world." It was this exhibition which drew from his heavenly Father that peculiar confession of his love, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Behold, then, what Bishop Taylor terms "the miracles of God's mercy," his boundless charity to a world of sinners! "What shall we say to these things," but that which St. John has said already for us, "God is love?" Yes—the covenant of our peace bound together, by new bonds of endearment, the glorious persons who were contracting parties. For how shall we otherwise interpret that wondrous passage, "Therefore, doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again?" Yes; God so loved the world, that when his adorable Son stood forth as its deliverer, as the captain of its salvation, to be "made perfect through sufferings," it drew new complacencies from the Father's heart. *He loved him for his love to us.* Nor was it the Eternal Father alone that did so. The humiliation of Jesus at his baptism—his abasement for our sakes—his entrance upon the work of our salvation—this was the powerful attraction, the golden chain which drew down the Holy Spirit through the opening skies. It was at this sight that the dove spread its celestial wings, and left the joy of paradise and bliss of heaven, that

it might salute the eternal Son as the champion of lost man, and gratulate him as “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

If such be the character of that Triune God, in whom “we live, and move, and have our being,” what have the men that trust in Him to fear? I speak *of* those, and *to* those alone, who are willing to be saved on the gracious terms which his unbounded goodness offers—to accept those mercies which are freely offered. He who died, “the just for the unjust,” did not purchase for us a mere negative salvation. He has not brought us through the Red Sea, that we might wander in a void and vacant wilderness. No. He died, “that he might bring us to God;” that he might conduct us into a good land, and guide our feet into the way of peace—that he might lead us through scenes of bliss, and fields of light, into a paradise which his own hand has planted, with every tree which is pleasant to the eyes, and good for food—that He might “fulfil all our mind, and grant our heart’s desire”—that He might answer with satisfying good, and with “the thing that they long for,” the vast desires, the boundless appetites, and the loftiest aspirations of man’s immortal nature. All this, and more than this, is included in the great blessing, namely, in the restoration and return of the soul to God. Brought back to

the Eternal Father, through the merits of his Son, and by the gentle inspirations of the Holy Ghost, the heart reposes in the bosom of the Trinity, as in the rest for which its purest sensibilities were formed. It feels like one, who, being long a wanderer in strange lands, finds himself again in his native country, within the fond, familiar, and magic circle of his home—amidst those substances whose shadows had lengthened throughout all his journeyings; the originals, whose images his heart had reflected in every region and in every clime.

Such is but the faint resemblance of the conversion of a soul to God. But, though faint, it is still true. True as is the portrait which God himself has drawn, in the father of the repentant prodigal. And if these lines should fall into the hand of any, who, like that young man, have sought, in a world of vanity, that rest which it never yet has yielded; if they have found a mighty famine in that land; if they have begun to see in their true light the misery of sin, and the blessings they have left behind them—let them take courage from his example; and let them read the character of God's forgiveness, in the reception of that long-lost, but repentant child—“And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

S E R M O N VII.

ON BELIEF IN CHRIST.

“ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”—ACTS xvi. 31.

GOD has divers means by which “ he brings home his banished.” By various methods he leads his straying sheep and erring children out of the wilderness of this world, and brings them into the green pastures and blissful habitations which the gospel of his grace provides. In a certain sense, He “ becomes all things to all men, that He may by all means save some.” Like a considerate and tender parent, he tries every endearing motive and every fond persuasive art, to reconcile to himself those hearts which he knows can never rest until they rest in him. It is true that “ other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” The great outlines of salvation are the same in every instance. Through the great Reconciler, “ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” He is “ the door of the sheep ;”

and no man cometh unto God but by him. Nevertheless, as I have already said, within these outlines of gospel truth various are the moral forces which the Spirit brings severally to bear upon the hearts of men. Divers are the methods by which he would redeem his people “from the hand of the enemy, and gather them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” Some are wafted by the softest breath and gentlest gales of love: others are driven by the rudest storms of fear into the haven where they would be, into the calm port of present peace and everlasting rest.

Of this diversity of operations we have a striking illustration in the chapter now before us. We have the case of Lydia on the one hand, and the jailer of Philippi on the other. In the former, nothing can be more easy than the transition, or more gentle than the process by which this amiable disciple received the adoption of a child and daughter of the Lord Almighty.

It is related by the biographer of Bishop Horne that, when that celebrated prelate was an infant, “his father used to awake him by playing on the flute; that the change from sleeping to awaking might be gradual, and pleasant, and not produce the outcry which frequently happens when children are suddenly and violently aroused.” Thus

was Lydia softly raised, by the voice of her heavenly Father, from the slumbers of her former ignorance; and thus did the light break in, not with overpowering lustre, and with sudden glare, but by the gentlest insinuations, upon her docile mind. But the whole is best told in the simple words of Scripture; and surely, if St. Luke were, as tradition tells us, a painter by profession, his pencil could not have sketched a scene of more exquisite beauty, or more calm repose: "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

In pointed contrast with this tranquil scene, we have the conversion of the Philippian jailer, on occasion of which the words of my text were spoken.

No sooner had the apostle ejected the spirit of divination from the damsel of whom we read in the tenth verse, than an assault was made by her master, who had reaped large profits from her soothsaying, upon Paul and Silas. To their destruction, indeed, all around them had been

predisposed. Violently dragged before the magistrates, accused of crimes which they knew not, the objects of suspicion to the governors and the governed, to the authorities and to the multitude, their fate is at once decided; and, without even the form of a trial, their sentence is forthwith pronounced: "The magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And, when they laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely." (ver. 22, 23.) This harsh and peremptory order lost nothing of its severity by the instrument to whom its execution was committed. The jailer having received such a charge, "thrust them into the inner prison," (the dungeon or place appropriated to condemned malefactors,) "and made their feet fast in the stocks." (ver. 22.)

It was now midnight. No ray of light crept through the crevices or iron grating of the prison. All was gloom and darkness. Nor could they have entertained any expectation but that of being dragged forth the day following from their dungeon to a painful, ignominious, and unpitied death. But, lo! some voices issue from that dismal cell; voices so audible and so loud that the prisoners heard them, and awoke from sleep. It was not the familiar address or colloquy of equals.

It was not the frantic cry of those who waste their lamentations upon the air. No: it was the calm, collected, self-possessed, and solemn sound of a soul while communing with its God. But it was more than mere sound: the details of their petitions were doubtless heard. Nor can we be slow in conjecturing the subject matter of the prayer. They doubtless prayed for "patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of their afflictions." With still more fervour did they supplicate, that God should be glorified in those sufferings, and that their bonds in Christ should "fall out rather for the furtherance of the Gospel." They interceded, doubtless, for their oppressors, for those "who despitely used them and persecuted them." Nay, the event would seem to argue that, while the prisoners overheard them, they were at that very moment offering up their prayers for him who had thrust them into the dungeon, and made their feet fast in the stocks. That they were so, is more than intimated by the signs and wonders by which that prayer was followed: "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every man's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his

sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." (ver. 26, 27.) At this awful crisis, this soul, just standing upon the brink of irremediable destruction, was saved at once from death both temporal and eternal; was saved not by a stretched-out arm, "not by might, nor by power, but by that Spirit" which taught these men of God to love their enemies, and bless their persecutors. The instrument of his two-fold deliverance is that very voice which was lately lifted up for him in prayer. Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." The whole scene forces upon his conviction the sense of a present God. Nor was his strong impression of this great truth the result merely of the earthquake, and the trembling foundations of the prison, or the doors flying open of their own accord. No; terrors like these may set nature in alarm; but deeper than nature they seldom penetrate: they do not reach the conscience, they do not sink down into the heart. Besides, in this case the danger was all over.

I remember in early youth being told, by one who many years before had been in London during the shock of an earthquake, the following circumstance: He was at the time an inhabitant of the Temple; and he declared that nothing could exceed the mingled terror and cries to heaven of

those around him; but that, in a few hours after their apprehensions were allayed, he heard the same tongues mocking at religion, as if ashamed of their slavish fears: "It happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The storm ceased, and there was a calm; that calm of death, in which "the fool says in his heart, There is no God." It was not, if I may use the term, mere physical fear which convinced this highly-favoured man that the hand of God was in the matter, and which drove him to seek salvation for himself and for his house. No: the Lord was not in the earthquake, but in the still small voice which, by the mouth of his messenger, said, "Do thyself no harm."

It was the generous philanthropy, the noble superiority to all vindictive feeling, the full and free forgiveness of wanton injuries so recently and so cruelly inflicted, it was their godlike return of good for evil, which evidenced of Paul and Silas that God was in them of a truth, that the message they delivered was from heaven, that the gospel which they preached was the power of God unto salvation. Thus did the goodness of God lead this sinner to repentance: "If God," said he, "be thus kind to the unthankful and to the evil;" if

he clothe his omnipotence in more than a father's pity or a mother's tenderness ; if God thus shield from danger and watch over those who cast out his name and persecute his cause ; if his language to me, a miserable sinner, be 'Do thyself no harm ;' if this be the character, the nature, the disposition, the heart of God, what then am I, so long a despiser of such compassion, a rejecter of such mercy ? What am I, who have been all my life-time trifling with this patience, and provoking this long-suffering ; who have been a rebel against infinite goodness and almighty love ? What indignation and wrath have I not fully merited ? What hell do I not most righteously deserve ? Oh, if I had not been arrested on the brink of a lost eternity ; if I had perpetrated that act of self-destruction on which I had been fully bent ; if this sword had cut the brittle thread of life, where should I have been now ? In what habitation of cruelty, in what abodes of horror should I have been fixed, and that for ever ; bound down with chains, thrust into a dungeon, to which the stocks and inner prison to which I wantonly consigned these men of God, would be comparatively a heaven ?" Filled with such thoughts, and impelled by such considerations, did the jailer fly, as sinners do to God—fly for succour in his extremity to those to whom he had been before "a

persecutor and injurious :” “Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

It is to this important question that Paul and Silas answered in the words before us : “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” This command, or rather this gracious invitation, is “exceeding broad.” It holds out a remedy for all distempers of the soul, a balm for every wound that festers in the heart. It calls to all that are astray upon the wide wastes of this hard world, all who are lost in its labyrinths, and groping in its cheerless paths, to return to a city of habitation, to a land where the weary are at rest, and where the wanderer may dwell at ease. It is the call of the Shepherd to all the sheep ; and they hear it, for they know his voice. It is the same voice which says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden ; and I will give you rest :” “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” is, as I said before, a balm for every wound. Is the soul just waking from the sleep of nature, and “rising

from the bed of spiritual death, overwhelmed with guilt and fear?" Does eternity break in upon its chambers with its piercing light, and present itself, for the first time, as a reality, for which no security has been provided, no preparation has been made? Does the anger of an offended God, does the sword of most just judgment seem ready to fall upon the head of the affrighted sinner? Do the sorrows of death compass him, the pains of death get hold of him? Here, then, is a refuge from all his fears; for, let his sins be as scarlet, let them be as the sand upon the sea-shore innumerable, he cannot have out-sinned the merits of an infinite atonement. Let them rise before the conscience in what fearful magnitude they may, they cannot equal, nay, they must fall far short of the price laid down; unless the frenzied imagination would invest sin in the attributes of the eternal God. This may appear exaggerated language; yet, need I say? it is far below the magnitude of the subject. Persuaded I am, and from experience too, that, when our sins are set in array with their ceaseless repetitions and peculiar aggravations, when broken resolutions, unheeded warnings, and opportunities neglected, when mercies ill requited, and treasures trampled under foot; when our sins, I say, spread out into appalling magnitude and vast circumference before

our view, nothing can bring peace to the bosom; nothing can assure the conscience that these sins are covered, that their demerit is outmeasured, and their guilt outweighed, but a sacrifice and an atonement which partakes of the infinitude of God.

But it is not from the guilt of sin alone that the mind would secure a refuge, nor merely from its extrinsic punishment, that it would seek release. Sin is its own tormentor. Impurity, pride, and hatred, unsatisfied desires and restless cares—if these are left to rankle in the bosom, what would the pardon of our iniquities avail? How would it be, if the body were concerned and not the soul? If one of our natural members were undergoing some sharp incision, some fearful operation, what cruel trifling with our pain would it be to tell us that we should not be punished for the agonies we felt!

Well then, if sin itself be essential misery, if it be to the soul the deadliest distemper, the acutest suffering under which it is capable of labouring, what mockery of its woe would be the forgiveness of that sin, if pardon still left the poison unextracted, the gangrene still festering and spreading in the heart! But we have, blessed be God, a Saviour not only from the punishment, but from the power of sin. We have One who

“healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” If we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, if “with open face we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” if we realize Him to the mind and bring Him home to the heart by faith, we have in Christ, thus evidently set forth crucified before us, an object competent to the task of condemning sin in the flesh, of shaming down vice, and chasing impurity from the soul, of crucifying it to the world, and the world to it. For sensuality suits but ill with the felt presence of a dying Saviour, or pride with the remembrance of an humbled God. Thus is faith in Christ, by effective and natural operation, the power of God unto salvation. Thus, when “God arises, his enemies are scattered, and they which hate Him flee before Him.”

But the Son of God, when manifested, can do more than quell the sinful passions of the soul. He can supply its wants and fill its aching void. He can yield a happiness pure and immense as man’s immortal nature craves. “I am the living bread,” says He, “which came down from heaven, that a man should eat thereof, and not die:” “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life:” “He that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

Thus does He offer himself as the all-sufficient good and sovereign blessing. Thus does He present to the soul "the thing that it longs for," the food for which its vast capacities and boundless appetites were formed. But let us come down from these aspirations; let us enter into the secret chambers of the mind, and ask the heart what, amidst the daily disturbances of such a world as this, it mainly wants. How many hearts would answer to this question, "I want a friend—I want a home!" Nor can the nearest and dearest connection upon earth, the fondest parent, husband, wife, or child, even while spared to us, be all that this want requires. There are a thousand bosom secrets which we cannot tell them, a thousand recollections which they have no share in: there are a thousand sorrows with which they cannot sympathize; and for this reason;—they cannot know the complexity of interests and shades of feeling which constitute their peculiar bitterness to us, or make them press with such aggravated weight upon the heart. He, then, who by faith can, like the beloved disciple, lean upon the Saviour's breast, he, and he only, has found a friend on whom that heart, with all its weight and all its sensibilities, can repose. Nor is Jesus alone the friend that sticketh closer than a brother: He is the centre to which the soul may

fly, the home to which the weary pilgrim may betake himself, where he may lay down his load, and be at rest.

If there be a name dearer than any other to the heart of man, it is that of home. At that magic word, what fond associations, what soothing thoughts, what sweet remembrances gather round the heart! To that loved spot how does the mind instinctively cling in foreign regions and distant corners of the earth! But still man requires a sanctuary more inviolate, a retreat more tranquil and more calm than even home itself. For even there, who has not felt himself at times alone, amidst the circle of all the heart prized most on earth? The truth is, man must have some hiding-place, some home within his home, or feel himself a wanderer and a houseless stranger. To possess this refuge and this rest within, I believe to be the peculiar privileges of the sons of God. Others are dissipated and scattered on the mere surface of their being. *They* alone can retire into their own interior, and subside, if I may so call, it into their own centre. They, like the prodigal in the gospel, have "come to themselves." In their own bosom they have "a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Far from the

world they flee, to the shelter of that inward home, and realize the aspirations of those delightful lines :

“The quiet, solitary place,
For which I all my life have pined,
The still, sequestered wilderness
O might I in thy presence find.”

In those deep recesses of the soul, that *terra incognita* to the world, they find peace, stillness, silence, solitude. I am persuaded of the fact, that, by whatever law of our spiritual nature it may be, whoever enters into that closet and shuts to the door, is at once in felt communion with Him who seeth in secret. Yes, God is there; and Christ is there, dwelling in his own temple, and formed in the heart by faith. And then is fulfilled that consummation of all blessings: “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Such, then, is the home of which I speak, nearer and dearer to the heart even than that magic circle of family endearment and domestic love, which men call home, on earth.

S E R M O N V I I I .

THE COMPARATIVE FEAR OF GOD AND MAN.

“Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass ; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth.”—ISAIAH li. 12, 13.

THESE words are applicable to all times and all seasons ; and, in considering them, I shall, first of all, observe that there are two parties here spoken of—“man that shall die,” even “the son of man that shall be as grass ;” and “the Lord our Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth.” Secondly, I shall call your attention to the fact, that, in the common intercourse of the world, the former of these parties (man, and not the latter—God) is practically the object of reverence, respect, and fear. And, thirdly, I shall enlarge upon the meaning of that emphatic question with which these words commence—“Who art thou ?” And

I. As to the parties.

It appears to be a main object of the Scriptures, elsewhere as in the text, to set in the most vivid contrast with each other, the meanness, the emptiness, the nothingness of man ; and the all-sufficiency, the majesty, and the glory of God. We will take some instances of both. In verses 7 and 8 of this very chapter, we find these words : “ Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment ; and the worm shall eat them like wool.” Let us take next (and I cannot deny myself the pleasure of repeating the whole passage) the description of man in Job iv. : “ In thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face ; the hair of my flesh stood up : it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof : an image was before mine eyes : there was silence ; and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God ? Shall man be more pure than his Maker ? Behold, he put no trust in his servants ; and his angels he charged with folly. How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth !” (Job iv. 13—19.) “ Man,” again says Job, “ man that

is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." (Job xiv. 1, 2.) "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days as an handbreadth ; and mine age is as nothing before thee : verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity. (Ps. xxxix. 5.) In the same melancholy strain the prophet speaks : "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry ? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field : the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." (Isaiah xl. 6, 7.) In like manner the apostle James : "What is your life ? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little, and then vanisheth away." (James iv. 14.) And St. Peter, in almost the very words already quoted from Isaiah : "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." (1 Pet. i. 24.)

In wondrous contrast with the nothingness of man, the Scriptures labour, as it were, for language to set forth the majesty of God's glory. With what a simple but magnificent display of his almighty power do the first sentences of that sacred volume meet our view ! "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void ; and darkness

was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." (Gen. i. 1—3.) But even this the psalmist speaks of as the exhibition, not so much of God's greatness as of his condescension: "Who is like," says he, "unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth?" (Ps. cxiii. 5, 6.) "Thine, O Lord," says David, "is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord; and thou art exalted as Head above all." (1 Chron. xxix. 11.)

To celebrate this great theme, the Scriptures employ the grandest machinery, and the most consummate art of poetical composition. What merely human strains ever rose to so lofty a sublime as those in which God is represented in the 38th chapter of Job as challenging the patriarch to answer: "Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone of it; when the morning stars sang toge-

ther, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" (Job xxxviii. 4—11.) "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" (16, 17.) "Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of water may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?" (34, 35.)

With one more quotation from the Psalms I shall conclude. "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled: the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he

rode upon a cherub, and did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place : his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed ; hailstones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice ; hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them ; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen ; and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils." (Ps. xviii. 6—15.)

I have been thus diffuse, perhaps too much so, in quotations from the Scriptures, that you may see in what vast and utter contrast they represent the two parties to whom my text alludes. But, in fact, no tongue of men or angels, nay, not even the language of inspiration, could describe or measure the boundless interval which lies between finite and infinite, between the creature and the Creator, between sinful mortals and a holy God.

II. And yet I maintain that in the common intercourse of the world, the former of these parties, rather than the latter, is practically the object of reverence, respect, and fear. Indeed, the whole system of society seems founded on the

principle that human sanctions are above divine. What is the use of those various rules upon the statute-book, which prohibit the very things which the bible prohibits, and enjoin the very things which the bible enjoins? Is it because God's single authority is not of itself of sufficient weight, and therefore man's authority must come in to help it? Considering who the parties are, this thought would be abundantly revolting to the pious mind. But the real state of the case is worse, and of far more disparagement, than that. It is that God's authority has comparatively no weight at all; and therefore, to keep society in order, it is absolutely necessary that, even where the mouth of the Lord hath spoken with the most awful sanctions he can employ, the law of the land should interpose with its more effectual and prevailing influence.

But, where divine and human laws forbid or enjoin the very same thing, it may not be quite so easy to perceive to which of these powers obedience is chiefly yielded. Let us, then, take some instances in which these two authorities do not act conjointly, and see which most effectually enforces the practice of his laws. Let us take the case of debt, then. By the law of God, every one is strictly bound to give a portion of his substance to the poor. This, then, is a positive debt in God's

account. There are debts, also, in man's account, such as rents, taxes, interest due on bonds, &c. Which, then, of these, obligations is most punctually discharged? It is fully granted that we ought to give to the poor, that we owe them a certain portion of what we have, and that it is, *foro conscientiæ*, a debt. Why, then, are other debts paid, and that so often not? Simply because the one is due on man's authority, and the other on God's; because the neglect of the one is threatened with imprisonment in a gaol, of whose existence men can entertain no doubts, and the other with imprisonment in hell, which they practically consider as an old wives' fable. Again, see the stately decorum which prevails in the courts of earthly princes—the watchful vigilance and trembling anxiety with which each individual takes care to observe the rules laid down in every minute punctilio. Why is all this? Simply because the royal presence diffuses a magic influence around it. And is not the King of kings present wherever we turn our eyes? Do we not in him “live, and move, and have our being?” Is not “all the earth filled with the majesty of his glory?” Yet what marked effects does this produce? Do men in general, on this account, “walk honestly,” (that is, decorously,) “as in the day?” Do they abstain from all appearance of evil, and from everything which could offend “the

eyes of him with whom we have to do?" Do they feel that "the place on which they stand is holy ground?" No. They all admit that God is present; but that presence produces not half the controlling influence that the presence even of the most insignificant of their fellow-mortals would do. "It is a shame," says the apostle, "even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." And yet these secret, are all known to God. "In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night," when, in the estimation of the sinner, all is peace and safety, when he flatters his own heart and says, "No eye shall see me," from what inspection does he felicitate himself on his escape? Simply from the inspection of the eye of man. He knows that the eye of God is, with intensest gaze, upon his every act and thought. But what matters it? It no more interrupts his sinful pleasure than does the unconscious notice of the infant, or the stupid or unmeaning stare of one of the inferior animals. But, in fact, with the general mass, the fear of man, or in other words, the law of opinion, is the great regulator of life. Unmanageable as they would persuade themselves that their other passions are, and ready as they are to plead their force as a convenient palliative for sin, yet they all yield submissively to the master-passion, the fear of man. Where man's authority demands it, there

is no propensity of nature which they cannot systematically control. If so the law of opinion decrees, whatever men may be, women will be chaste as angels, and sober as disembodied spirits. Before their superiors, persons, whose tempers convert their families into miniatures of hell, are as mild and placid as the calm face of nature. Those who blaspheme the name of God, and insult Him to his face by habitual swearing, are perfect masters of their tongue in refined society. No oath will escape their lips, if in the presence of one of exalted rank, who disapproves the practice, or with whom, if not himself so strict, it would be taking a liberty or putting oneself too much on an equal footing, to swear. Thus is God treated as one who is not insulted, merely because the perpetration of that insult might be offensive to those whose claims to respect are practically admitted.

Indeed, the melancholy fact, that man is by his fellow-man valued more than God, appears so prominently in the whole carrying out of life, that it would be endless to advert to instances. One day out of seven is reserved for God's more immediate service. Are the general mass, then, most prone to let the business of the world encroach upon the sabbath, or to let the sabbath enlarge its borders, so that more than one day should be

withdrawn from the service of the world? How is it, moreover, with respect to truth? Will not persons in various offices, and high ones too, freely take the usual oaths and keep them or not, just as it is customary to do so, and laugh at those who will call it perjury? Will they not, if they have good precedent for this profanation, sit quite easy under any charge which God can make of having mocked Him by the solemn invocation of his name? Will not men do this, who would sooner face the king of terrors than leave it in the power of any to allege that they had in one instance told what man's opinion would pronounce a dishonourable falsehood?

How is it, also, with respect to common honesty? Is it not notorious that those who leave their fair creditors unpaid; who, not by the "law's delay," but by delaying what the law demands, bring ruin upon the industrious, and cause "their cries to enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth"—is it not notorious that these very persons will sell house and lands, and bring wife and children down from affluence to sudden beggary, to pay not the hard-earned price of virtuous industry, but the wages of riot, debauchery, and sin? And why is this? Because the one is a debt of justice and the other of honour; and because justice has its foundation in the fear of God, and honour has its foundation in the fear of man.

But enough, perhaps, of this distressing subject. The case is too clear to need more proofs. Of the far greater portion of society it may be affirmed, that "all their works they do for to be seen of men." To an extent, of which they are not themselves aware, the law of opinion, and not the law of God, is their rule of life. Much though, as Protestants, they object to antiquity or to the church as the authoritative and infallible interpreter of the word of God, they themselves leave it to the careless, thoughtless world around them, to fix the sense of Scripture upon every point of conduct. They say that the Bible contains the religion they profess; but to the world they leave it altogether to decide how much of its strictness and holiness is to be taken as applicable to their own case, or how much is to be passed over as what they have no business with, and what it would only confuse them or set them wild, to dwell on. Thus, God's revelation comes to them so filtered through man's opinion, that, in the process, it leaves all but the mere name behind. In fact, their religion is a mere substitute, which man, or rather Satan, has provided; something that has grown up to fill the space which religion ought to occupy, so that no sensible void is felt; something to avert the dangerous inquiry where and what religion is; something to turn

the conscience off from asking the important question, "What must I do to be saved?" Such, I solemnly believe, is the Christianity which generally prevails. Going to church on Sunday; receiving the sacrament on festivals; bringing children to be baptized, and that, if it befits their station, amidst scenes of vanity and dissipation enough to turn the water into blood—all this, and whatever else the world demands, is done, and decently done, by well-bred people; but the whole may be gone through without once lifting up a thought to God. This routine of outward forms, together with abstaining from whatever vices are disreputable in society, or whatever sins they are not privileged to commit by their age, or sex, or station—this is the religion of the world; and this, no less than what they would allow to be their irreligious acts, provokes the inquiry of my text: "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man which shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?"

II. We have now to consider, or, as I proposed, to enlarge upon the meaning of that emphatic question with which these words commence, "Who art thou?"

The inquiry seems to have been primarily ad-

dressed to those whose prevailing fear of man was the result rather of weakness under trying circumstances, than of carnal blindness and depravity of heart. It seems intended for the encouragement of God's people when threatened with dangers, and particularly when harassed by the terrors which cruel enemies inspire. The whole chapter, and especially the verses which include my text, seems to imply it. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." Then follow the words before us; to which are immediately subjoined those expressions of such inimitable pathos—"And hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?" As much as to say, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Where are the clouds thou so much dreadedst? Where is the storm which seemed ready to burst upon thy head? Where are the terrors that scared thee in visions of the night, the fears that rendered thee a burden to thyself? Where is the fury of the oppressor? Is it all like as a dream when one awaketh? Was it a creature of the imagination, a spectre of the fancy? Was there no oppressor; or, if there were, is the oppressor gone? Shall the eye which saw him see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him?"

There is, alas ! a fear of the world, which, though felt as a weakness and deplored as a sin, “still,” to use the words of our article, “doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerate.” Many that have ceased to love the world, and whose hearts are right with God, still feel the body of this sin, still are “afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass.” They despise and abhor themselves for such meanness, and acknowledge it to be the burden of their lives. They make no sinful compromise ; they pay no wilful homage to the world ; they perform no deliberate acts of submission to its authority. Nevertheless, when they are confronted with the men of this generation, when they meet them face to face and eye to eye, they lose their self-possession. They are disheartened and discouraged, and cannot “do the things that they would.” They decline a contest, and shrink from a collision which conscience secretly tells them they ought to brave. They do not, however, deceive themselves : they do not put things on a wrong footing, or call them by false names, or mask their timidity with the semblance of discretion. Their comfort is that God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss ; that, where the heart is sincere, He pities our weakness, and is ever ready to hear the cry of “God, be merciful to



me a sinner." To such the inquiry of my text is the language of reassurance and encouragement.

But in another sense, and with far different emphasis, does it apply to those who, in the genuine spirit of the world, and with the full agreement of the will, pay that homage to man which they deliberately refuse to God. Well may it be said to such, in a tone of mingled indignation and surprise, "Who art thou?" What reasonable intelligence can be so perverted; how fearfully and wonderfully made, how opposed to the laws of truth and nature, nay, what a contradiction to itself must be that darkened soul which fears him who can only kill the body, and has no more that he can do, rather than that dread Being who holds in his hands the keys of death and hell, who can destroy the soul, and plunge it into the abysses of a lost eternity! Surely an anomaly so strange, an inconsistency so utter, can be accounted for but in one way. It would be morally impossible, and contrary to nature, that any creature could, by any evil bias or malformation of the mind, behold these two objects—God and man—with equal clearness, and fear the latter rather than the former. No; in all such cases as we now suppose, those senses, which can alone take cognizance of God, are closed. The natural eyes and ears are open to see the form and hear

the voice of man. But, as it respects the spiritual avenues through which God is apprehensible to the soul, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying: Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive." Nevertheless this judicial blindness is no cloak for their sin: they have brought it on themselves: they are chargeable with fearing where no fear is, and with sleeping in the midst of the most appalling dangers.

To the Jew, whom the prophet more immediately addressed, these words, if taken in a reproachful sense, spoke with emphatic meaning. They embodied and centred in one charge all that the apostle afterwards so abundantly detailed. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" (Rom. ii 17—21.)

But to us, favoured so highly above God's ancient people; to us, who have before our eyes displays of goodness which many prophets and kings have desired to see, and have not seen them, with what redoubled force does this voice of expostulation speak! All that this question implies will perhaps be best understood by forming to ourselves some notion of the answer which the merely professing Christian would be compelled to give. I do not speak with reference to those weaknesses which God's faithful servants secretly deplore: I speak of that practical, wilful, and deliberate preference of man's favour to God's favour, which forms the general character and ruling spirit of the world. Let him, then, who lives in friendship with that world, answer for himself: "I am a creature formed by God, made in his glorious image, destined for happiness in time and in eternity; to sojourn for a few years in paradise below, and thence to ascend to a still purer and brighter paradise above. This high position, as a wilful transgressor of the Divine law, and rebel against Almighty goodness, I was doomed to forfeit; but this was only that mercy might seek and find me in the lowest depths, and that the rebound and reaction of that fall might elevate me above the level of my former innocence. All this I believe, and do moreover confess it as my

privilege to have the fullest and clearest knowledge of what God is, and more especially of what he is to me. The creed which I repeated with my infant lips taught me his ubiquity, his immensity, the glory of his majesty, the terrors of his omnipotence. It taught me also that God is love; and that he so loved me as to make his only begotten Son the suffering victim for my sins. I knew that to the free exercise of God's goodness and loving-kindness to a disobedient race there was no limit, but their own unwillingness to receive them. It is my full conviction that the most excursive imagination, if taxed to its utmost powers, could not conceive proofs and demonstrations of love more unequivocal or more touching to the heart, than he has revealed in Scripture." Such must be the confession of even the most worldly mind. And well may God apply to such these affecting words: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, than I have done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" And with no less suitableness might he add, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. With all this knowledge in thine head, hast thou set up the abomination of desolation in thy heart?"

Hast thou left the fountain of living waters, and hewed out to thyself broken cisterns which hold no water? Hast thou bowed down, not with a reluctant fear which infirmity might palliate, but with a willing reverence, with a ready mind, and with the free-will homage of the heart, before thy fellow-sinner, and thy kindred worm, and hast preferred and honoured him above thy Great Benefactor, before the Chiefest Excellence, and the Sovereign Good?"

My brethren, I would, in conclusion, desire to give a particular and personal pointing to the words before us. "Who art thou?" or rather, is there one in this congregation who thus worships and serves the creature more than the Creator?" Is there one on whom we could fix the imputation which my text contains, and say, "Thou art the man?" If, then, thine own conscience would single thee out, and charge thee with disaffection towards thy Maker, consider for a moment the awful position in which thou standest, the fearful prospects which lie before thee. Upon whom wilt thou call in the day of thy distress? Can man "arise and save thee in the time of thy trouble?" Can the world comfort thee upon a bed of sickness? Can it speak peace to thine heart, when bleeding for the loss of thy parent, thy husband, thy wife, thy child, thy friend? Can it pluck from

memory a rooted sorrow? Can it lighten the darkness of a dying hour? O then “cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.” Trust not the vast concerns and all-important interests of thy soul to those who “are deceitful upon the weights and lighter than vanity itself.” Would to God that I could address those words of the prophet Samuel with prevailing influence to your hearts: “I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you.” Let, then, all his goodness pass before you. Call to mind his personal mercies to yourselves; the peculiar benefits and favours which he has poured upon you. Remember that it was he who took thee out of thy mother’s womb. Remember how often in after life you called upon him in your troubles, and he delivered you out of your distress. Remember the patience with which he has borne your provocations; the long-suffering which spared you when your own overt acts impeached you of high treason against heaven. Consider, I beseech you, before it be too late to survey the perils that surround your path, the fatal precipice that lies before you. And if the terrors of the Lord cannot affright you, let his love persuade you, let his goodness find a passage to your hearts. To countless mercies past,

he “ adds this above all,” that he is ready at this moment, if you will draw nigh to him, to draw nigh to you with free forgiveness, and with all the yearnings of a Father’s heart. Arise, then, and go to that Father. And, though your sins have been as scarlet, and as the sand on the sea-shore innumerable, learn the manner of your reception from the picture of himself, which God’s own unerring hand has drawn : “ And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

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